

# **Who Put Worms in the Cheese?**

## **A World Traveler's Survivor Guide**



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## **Introduction**

In this world of high technology and fast speed, we find an ever-increasing number of people moving to other countries. The reasons for moving overseas are as many and varied as the people themselves. Some relocate because of a job, while others seek a different lifestyle than was offered in their home country. Whatever the reasons maybe, there are some things common to world travelers: adjustments and changes.

The process of adjustment is inevitable. This small guide helps with preparation for living abroad and offers suggestions to help with the process. As I write this introduction, I am an acculturation project in progress. May this guide benefit its readers.

## Preparation

Mentally:

Once you have decided on the country you will be residing in for a while, learn as much as you can about that country. Knowledge is the key to learning to accept and respect things that you may see that are different than what you consider to be normal.

1. Study the history of the country and countries that may have occupied it at one time. Also, knowing something about the political structure of a country is important. Every country has its positive and its negative points. Being aware of the negative points can prevent you from doing things that may cause troubles or hard feelings. For example: Sudan has a long history of political problems. Relations between America and Sudan have been strained at best for years. There are different viewpoints and misconceptions on both sides. As with any country or peoples, you don't go in their home criticizing their policies while holding your own in high regard. This can happen in many ways and you not even realize it. For instance, I was teaching a General English class once and we started discussing education in this particular country. (I won't mention the name of the country out of respect) One student commented that there needed to be mandatory and secure education for all children. I followed this up with child labor law and the minimum age for working in the United States. The classroom got quiet and one student blurted out, "Sometimes it is necessary for a child to work!!!", and then awaited my response. At that moment, I realized that I had gotten myself into a jam. Although I consider myself culturally sensitive and aware, I had presented myself in a manner not befitting. They were offended and rightly so. I had no right to sit in front of them and basically say, "Yes the family should starve while the child goes to school." Although I did not use these words, this is the message that I sent.

2. Language Acquisition: If your designated country's national language is different than yours, start to study the language of your host country. If you are traveling with small children, find

a language course for them. Children usually are not intimidated by other languages and become proficient in other languages rather quickly. The more you and your family study before relocating, the less culture shock and adjustments after you arrive. Shopping, work, talking with neighbors and making friends will be much more of a delight.

### **Traveling Humor and Mishaps #1**

When I think back to my early days living in Egypt; some moments cause me to cry and some cause me to laugh hysterically. One particular case stands out. I had been in Cairo for about three weeks. Me, being American, I was used to buying produce and weighing it by the pound; if I weighed it at all. Well, food is weighed in kilograms in Egypt. Not preparing myself properly ahead of time, I did not know this. I went to a fruit stall and said in Arabic that I wanted six oranges. The man smiled BIG and said, “Six coming”. He began putting orange after orange into the bag. I was waving my hands and saying, “no, no, no, six only!!!” The vendor was like, “Yes, six coming.” I ended up with two huge bags of oranges. He had given me six kilos of oranges. That is 13.2 pounds of oranges!!! I had oranges for days. We had orange salad, orange juice, orange beef, coffee with orange and orange tea. (In my Bubba voice)

### **Traveling Humor and Mishaps #2**

I got sick my first winter in Egypt and fainted. When I fainted my right foot was folded under my body so my foot was sore. My family called the doctor to come to the house. So, he asked me to describe to him all of my symptoms. I told him, *عندي الم في اسبوع القادم* I was trying to say that my toes hurt. What I said was, “This coming week hurts.” So, the doctor started chuckling and I laid there in pain and offended. These two examples are actually minor situations. But, the lack of preparations can cause more serious mishaps to occur.

Physically:

Physical preparation is so important. I am not saying you

have to be in the best shape of your life, but the healthier you are, the less you will suffer from physical adjustments that need to be made. Every continent has its own climate, animals, and bacteria, etc. So, if you relocate to a different continent, you are going to have some major adjustments. Your body will have to adjust to things such as food, water, air etc.

1. You should strengthen your immune system by taking black seed, also known as black cumin. Studies have shown that consistent use of black seed strengthens the immune system

2. If you are not exercising, increase your daily activity. A thirty minute walk per day is sufficient to increase your stamina and endurance. People in countries like the USA, Britain and Australia for example drive more than people who live in other countries. In many countries, the people rely on walking or public transportation. Neither of these mentioned is quite the same as in a Western country.

Things that occur:

- a. You may walk on sand or rocks instead of pavement. (The shock, wear and tear on the joints is harder.)
- b. You may walk quite long distances, even to catch public transportation.

Public Transportation: WOW!!!

In the Sudan, there are several modes of public transportation:

1. Taxi
2. Rickshaw
3. Mini-van
4. Bus

The first two mentioned are not so bad, however, the mini vans and buses can get crowded to the point that people are hanging out of the door; an interesting sight to see indeed!!!

Another physical challenge you may encounter is having to climb many stairs. In some countries, unless the building is over six stories

high, it does not have an elevator. That's right, "NO ELEVATOR!!" Can someone say, "Jane Fond Workout?" Carrying groceries up flights of stairs is no small feat. If you have been couch-potatoeing it for months, maybe even years, then you may find the first few months to be tortuous or spend many hours trying to find a first or second floor apartment.

Well, after having prepared some for your life-altering journey, it's time to pack. You will save yourself much time and embarrassment if you check the weight and size limitations of the luggage you will carry on the plane with the airline carrier. If your bags are over the weight limit, you have only two options:

1. Take some things out of your bag (EMBARRASSING)
2. Pay extra money for extra weight. (Extra money may not be available)

So, to avoid this, pack your bags and then weigh them before traveling day. Make sure you look at your checklist before going to the airport. Make sure you educate yourself on the visa requirements far ahead of time so that you can take the necessary steps to obtain visas. Some countries, like Egypt will allow you to obtain tourist visas at the airport when you arrive. However, there are countries, like Sudan, that you must have some sort of sponsor. For me, I had been hired by a school to teach English. They did all of the preliminary visa applications, scanned and emailed me copies to present in the airport. Once I arrived to the airport, an official checked my documents and then cleared us for travel. When we arrived in Sudan, a representative from the host company met us at the airport and completed the visa process.

So, now you've packed. Remember, international flights are usually more crowded than domestic ones. Most airlines suggest that you come two hours in advance. From my experience traveling abroad, I would say arrive 3 to 4 hours early. You want to have time to adjust to or handle any mishaps that may occur and take appropriate actions. You want to gently glide to your gate, sit-down, rest, maybe use the restroom, and eat before departure. If you have children traveling with you, this is very important. It doesn't matter how well-planned you are; children seem to always have to use the restroom or have some weird accident at the wrong time. Please have some foresight!!

You will get your first teaser of your host country at the airport from airline workers down to the passengers.

**Remember**

**Do's:**

1. When in Rome, do as the Romans
2. Be nice
3. Be patient
4. Embrace the change

**Don't:**

1. Talk about your country and its greatness.
2. Don't carry any items in your bags for another person.
3. Hold the people to the same standards you are used to.

\*\*\*Note: Westerners, in general, are very hurried. A lot of people in other countries are more relaxed and laid back. Their approach to handling business is more social than a formal affair. You may have many cups of tea and biscuits before any business is mentioned.

## On The Plane

You have made it through luggage weigh in, security checks and customs. You are on the plane; and on your way to new discoveries and adventures!!! What should you do now?

1. Practice your language skills with flight attendants. They are bilingual or even multi-lingual and usually welcome it.
2. Listen to the people on the plane. Sharpen your listening skills. International flights are long and tedious. Passengers tend to walk around and socialize more than on domestic flights. This is your chance to make contacts and new friends.
3. Get up and walk every one to two hours to reduce swelling and the possibility of blood clots.
4. Get some rest if possible. Time changes will have your body confused for a while. You want to offset this as much as possible.

## Arrival

“We are currently at 30,000 feet. We will begin our descent. We will arrive at approximately 4:30 p.m. Everyone put on your seat belts please!!”

You are about to land. A steward/stewardess will bring you a small card, usually white, to fill out for your visas once you land. If you already have a visa stamp on your passport, there really is no need to fill out this card.

From the time you step off of the plane, don't assume that anything is complimentary. The person who takes your bags off the belt, places them on a trolley, smiling all the way, will want a large amount of money from you at the end. Unless you just feel like being super generous or do not have the ability to haul your bags yourself, then take my advice: REJECT ALL OFFERS and DIY. (Do-it-yourself) If you have done your preparation work, then you have made some contacts or an employer will be meeting you and assisting you to your new home.



\*\*\* May I note here again!! Please don't hold people to the same standards you are accustomed to. You will surely be let down. Save yourself some time and frustration. Mix-ups WILL occur.

### **Mishaps #3**

Coming from the United States, I was used to business being handled in a timely manner and things being said were fulfilled. However, here in Sudan the most famous words are bukra(tomorrow), ba'du sway (after a while) and in shaa Allaah (if Allah wills). Relax and adjust to this lifestyle. You may find after a while, once you adjust, you will find yourself in a less stressful state than you were in your own busied country.

### **Things to Purchase Immediately**

1. Water Filter or Bottled Water: The water WILL BE different. You do not want to drink the local water immediately, you will get sick. The cheapest way to purify water is with a water filter installed on your faucet sink. However, you should after a couple of weeks drink a cup or two of the local water so that your body adjusts. Why would I advise such a thing????!!! Well, if you don't, you will be living as a recluse. Neighbors, friends and co-workers are bound to invite you for meals and gatherings or send food over. You want to be able to enjoy these times, not leave each event sick.

2. Apple Cider Vinegar: You can't have enough of this in your home. The #1 use that I have for this product is boiling meats before preparing them the way I want to eat them and washing fruits and veggies. Studies have shown that apple cider vinegar kills many parasites. There are so many uses for vinegar that they cannot be all listed here. However, I will give a short list:

- a. Stripping oil and dirt from hair. (Useful in desert countries)

b. Most bugs don't like the smell or taste.

1. Spray walls with water/vinegar solution
2. Mop floors with vinegar solution

c. Alternative Medicine

1. Help reduce high blood pressure
2. Prevents blood clots
3. Externally for sprains and wounds along with cayenne pepper

3. Food Purchase: Time to stock the Fridge!!

**Do:**

1. Find where the average local consumer buys his food.
2. Take a native speaker with you until you know the prices.
3. Buy things in bulk. (Oatmeal, flour, rice, sugar, beans, etc)
4. Buy food that are in season: they are cheaper.

**Don't:**

1. Buy from Western- styled markets centered for tourist. You know the ones who sell things like Cinnamon Toast Crunch for three times the prices. It will eat up your money very quickly.
2. Don't buy things from the open market for the first price that they give you. They are always going to give you a price higher than the product is worth. Argue them down. It's the name of the game!!

3. Don't be a money-flasher. You make it hard for other foreigners coming behind you, especially those working with limited funds. When vendors see that you are a big spender or the price is of no concern to you, they will raise their prices.

4. Buy foods out of season. You will get inferior quality for a higher price. Foods bought in season are always healthier and cheaper. When foods are in season they are abundant so the vendor can afford to sell them for a lower price. He has to sell them before they go bad and cannot be sold; he then doesn't make a profit at all.

### Acculturation

What is acculturation? According to the dictionary it is the process of conditioning a child to the patterns or customs of a culture or becoming adapted to a new or different culture with more or less advanced patterns. Acculturation is something that **MUST** take place in order for the world traveler to thrive in his/her new environment.

The first step to adjusting to your new environment is **“letting go!”** You cannot spend your every waking minute chasing the life you had back home. You will be miserable. I feel very safe saying that “not being able to let go” is the number one reason people cannot enjoy life overseas. They are in constant search for merchants who sale things from their home country, people coming to visit from their home country that can bring them products that they miss; wasting lots of money. **“Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore!!”** Everything is new. Your life is constantly changing. Embrace it!! Buckle your seat belt and enjoy the ride.

\*\*Now, I am not saying to never eat food or purchase products from home. But, I am saying don't go broke seeking it. Open up to the dishes, flavors and products around you.

### Travel Mishap #4

I had a neighbor from America when I was living in one of the cities in Egypt who would spend any amount of money necessary to purchase Lawry's season salt. The western market sold it for a ridiculous price. If

she learned of anyone from the States traveling to Egypt, she would send money to buy big bulk bottles of Lawry's. For only a couple of dollars, she could have bought the individual ingredients, combined them, and made enough to last for quite some time. For all of you Lawry's lovers, please, go to the open market or a spice shop and purchase:

2 tablespoons salt  
2 teaspoons sugar  
1/2 teaspoon paprika  
1/4 teaspoon turmeric  
1/4 teaspoon onion powder  
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder  
1/4 teaspoon cornstarch

You can double, triple, quadruple this recipe. These ingredients are soooooo cheap. It does not matter what country you live in, these things can be purchased cheaply.

Another way you can embrace your new surroundings is through socialization. How do you do this?

1. Be accessible to neighbors, colleagues, and co-workers.
  - a. Introduce yourself
  - b. Visit them
  - c. Be very observant so that you can learn the etiquettes of socialization and proper chit-chat.
2. Visit any places of historical interest.
3. As much as possible adopt the dress of the people unless there are religious restrictions.
4. Put your children in a local school and not an international school tailored toward foreigners. Watch how fast your children become proficient in the native language of that place.

At the time of writing this guide, I have been in my current location for fourteen months. My eleven-year old had a lot of Arabic background, but

my six-year old could not speak or understand Arabic and my two-year old could barely speak English. One year later, unless someone already knows that my boys are not from here, no one picks them out from the other children. I even asked an Arabic instructor, when you speak with my children, do they speak like second language learners? The instructor responded no, there is no difference between them and us. In school they receive instruction in a mainstream classroom and no exceptions are made for them. I was very pleased with their report card marks.

I am not saying international schools are bad or that you should leave your children in a local school forever. My evaluation is from a linguistic perspective only. In terms of language acquisition; a school term in a local school works wonders.

Now that I have mentioned some things that you should do to acculturate to your new society, I would like to talk about things that you definitely should not do. These following things will cause people to be uncomfortable with you and you may start to have feelings of alienation.

**Don't:**

1. Dominate conversations with glorious talk about your homeland. Unless you are specifically asked about some aspect of your country, leave this off in your conversations.
2. Laugh at or belittle a tradition or the manner in which people do things. (Warning: Superiority complex rearing its ugly head!!)
3. Describe a dish as nasty, not good, awful, etc. If you don't want it, then keep a good game face and eat around what you don't want so that you don't offend anyone.

**Traveling Mishaps and Humor #5**

I was living in a small village, the very first time I lived overseas. One day I sat down on the floor to eat with my neighbors. The food spread looked so wonderful. As I am reaching towards one dish, I notice something moving in the cheese. "Is that a maggot?" I think to myself. Then I noticed, not only is it one but there was quite a few worms in the cheese. So, now I am thinking, "Who put worms in the cheese?" I looked around at the people eating and I debated within myself whether I should say something. "Do they KNOW its worms in the cheese?" The lady next to me was about to put her bread in the cheese. So, I say, "You know there are worms in the cheese!?!?" To my surprise she shrugged her shoulders and said, "Yes, no problem, it's normal." !!!?????!!!!!! So you

KNOW there are worms in the cheese!!!????!!! So here I started doing a mental (internal) check of my outer faculties.

“Good game face, check”

“Smile, check”

“Good posture, check.”

I had to use all of my senses to keep it together. See, I did not want to offend anyone. This type of cheese was their norm, but it wasn't mine. I think I managed to hide the fact that I was appalled and disgusted because over a period of three years I was invited to many occasions and events and the worm cheese was there for almost every meal.

Acculturation is an ever, ongoing process. I could write a book on acculturation alone. There are going to be discomforts along the way. It is inevitable. However, if you educate yourself, prepare yourself and let go, open up to your new environment, it can also be full of happiness and rewards.

### **Third-Culture Children**

According to Wikipedia, a third culture child is someone who, as a child, spent a significant amount of his developing years in one or more countries other than his birth country. His personality is a combination of his birth culture and the other cultures he has been exposed too. Yet, he does not identify completely with the people in either culture. Rather, he is a sum total of them all.

It is quite obvious that there are many advantages to growing up multicultural and multi-lingual. Also there are disadvantages. The country and environment you live in plays a major role in the development of the TCK. It helps to shape and form his attitude about many things. It is a MUST as a parent to be able to identify problems to be able to help him/her or give their issue special care. I will list some of the advantages and disadvantages of raising children overseas.

**Advantages:**

1. Children are exposed to more than one language and are usually multi-lingual.
2. Children are usually multi-cultural
3. TCK's are usually sensitive to the plight of others on an international level. (Usually become relief workers, UN peacekeepers, Peace Corps workers, etc)

**Disadvantages:**

1. Having feelings of not belonging (Where is home?)
2. Not being able to relate to single culture children. (Home country and in foreign country)
3. Oversensitive about world issues.
4. Sometimes leaning toward one culture while labeling his own as bad or inferior. (Example: refusing to speak his native language)

The above mentioned things can be minor but can also become very severe if attention is not given to them. Sometimes a child feels he has no real place to call home. He has feelings of loneliness and will become very clingy to his parents or siblings. There may be an item or thing from some part of the world that bring him extra comfort because for HIM it represents home. For example: I have one child who loves Raman Noodles. He will cry over them, fight over them and beg to get them. When we were in the States, we used to buy them by the case. I used them in various dishes for their lunches. Oddly enough, this represents HOME for this particular child.

So, as parents of TCK's what do we do when we are facing acculturation problems with our children? First and foremost, it is very important that our children are not completely cut off from their homeland. They should be exposed to their own culture and language. This will enable them to also accept and adapt to another language and culture easier. If a child feels like they are having to learning a new language at the cost of their

native language, they may mentally reject the acquisition of this new language. In many countries, they have clubs tailored toward certain countries. Where I am currently located they have a club called the American club. It is like an activity center. My children can enjoy sports that are just not found here such as basketball, American football and boxing. So, on those days when they are simply tired of soccer, they can socialize with others in English and play a game or two of a sport they are used to. You would be surprised how this works wonders on the attitude of a frustrated child.

### **International Homeschooling**

One of the greatest joys of my life has been homeschooling my wonderful children. I began homeschooling in 1995. Back then, there were not as many resources as we have today and it was rough, but well worth it. One of the major concerns of world travelers is the equality of education their children will receive abroad. This is a real concern. The manner in which children are educated varies from country to country and culture plays a big role in the education process. As a world traveler you also have to consider the acculturation process your children are going through and any potential problems they may face in school. I find myself doing a combination of traditional schooling and homeschooling. In general here in Sudan, children are more conservative and reserved than I am accustomed to. Education=Memorization. There is no room for imagination and exploration. So, for me, I have to supplement their education at home. Science projects, field trips and play are a part of my program. Having an at-home program that is full of exploration and experimentation really aids the TCK (third culture kid) adjust to his new environment and gives him an outlet that is full of adventure and education. In my opinion, a good homeschooling program for a world traveler will incorporate a lot of native language study, fun extra-curricular activities online and offline, and field trips. All of these areas can be linked in subject to teach concepts firmly.

### **Traveling Mishaps and Humor #6**

The school my children attend has many advantages. However, the children are not allowed free play. The first day of school my 12 year old came home saying he got in trouble. So, of course with it being his first day, I was quite concerned. So, I asked him why he got in trouble. He said, "I climbed a tree." So, I am waiting for more. But that was it; they told him that it was very very bad to climb a tree. For him, this was normal and apart of his daily life. Boys climb trees!!



## **Living off the Grid**

Now, I could not finish this book without mentioning two of my great loves. I have always been drawn in by the concepts of self-sufficiency and back-to-the basics living. In this age of technology, we don't do anything for ourselves anymore. We don't know where our food comes from or what is in it. We buy, buy, buy everything for our daily lives all the while getting sicker and sicker and more lost than ever before. We, as a people are sicker in general than any of the people of the past. For me, living overseas has brought me to a simpler way of living. Although I don't have as many amenities as I had in America, I have peace and good health. Have you ever considered what would happen if the food industry was to stop or something happened to wipe out technology? How would we survive? Well, what about now? Isn't fresh better than genetically-modified? I think so. It doesn't take much room. Many vegetables grow in containers. If you have a deck or a balcony you can grow a raised bed garden. This also is more cost effective especially for large families. There is a family in Pasadena, California. They are affectionately known as the Urban Homesteaders. They grow 6000 pounds of food a year on 1/10th of an acre of land. They are true inspirations to anyone striving for self-sufficiency.

## **Conclusion**

World traveling is great but it does take some preparation and readjusting your mindset. I hope that this small guide will help someone with their decision to move overseas and to eliminate some frustrations along the way. Please, as you travel around the world, keep me posted. I would love to hear about your joys, pains and adventures.

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<http://homewithnoborders.blogspot.com>

## **Links and Resources**

### Expatriate Sites

<http://www.expatsfinancial.com/links.htm>

<http://expatriatepay.blogspot.com/2011/01/expatriate-webzine.html>

<http://expatwomen.com/>

<http://www.expats.org.uk/links/women.html>

<http://www.womenlivingabroad.com/>

### **Third-Culture Kids/ Global Nomads**

<http://www.worldweave.com/GN.html>

<http://paradiselostintranslation.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.edutopia.org/global-nomads-at-risk-students-connect-peersworldwide>

<http://future.state.gov/where/stories/nomad/>

<http://www.tckworld.com/>

<http://tckid.com/>

### **Self-Sufficiency**

<http://urbanhomestead.org/>

[http://www.organic-gardening-andhomesteading.com/urban\\_homesteading.html](http://www.organic-gardening-andhomesteading.com/urban_homesteading.html)

<http://beingfrugal.net/2008/05/02/urban-homesteading/>

<http://www.daycreek.com/dc/html/ssmenu.htm>

<http://www.aselfsufficientlife.com/>

<http://freedomgardens.org/>

<http://woodridge.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.countryfarm-lifestyles.com/self-reliance.html>

[http://www.gardeningtipsnideas.com/2009/02/10\\_must\\_grow\\_plants\\_for](http://www.gardeningtipsnideas.com/2009/02/10_must_grow_plants_for)

[\\_the\\_self\\_sustainable\\_garden.html](http://the_self_sustainable_garden.html)

### **Homeschooling**

<http://www.lessonpathways.com>

<http://homeschooling.gomilpitas.com/regional/Europe.htm>

<http://www.time4learning.com/>

<http://www.theteacherscorner.net/>

<http://www.teach-nology.com/teachers/>

[http://educhoices.org/articles/Online\\_Libraries\\_-\\_25\\_Places\\_to\\_Read\\_Free\\_Books\\_Online.html](http://educhoices.org/articles/Online_Libraries_-_25_Places_to_Read_Free_Books_Online.html)

<http://simplycharlottomason.com/>

<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-mason.htm>

<http://www.amblesideonline.org/WhatIsCM.shtml>  
<http://www.unschooling.com/>  
[http://www.naturalchild.org/guest/earl\\_stevens.html](http://www.naturalchild.org/guest/earl_stevens.html)

\*Note: This is a resource page. I support homeschooling ideas in general. It is left up to each individual parent to incorporate religious studies accordingly.