

PAN ATLANTIC EXCHANGES TIPS FOR ADJUSTING TO LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

Moving to a new country is an exciting experience—but it can also take time to adjust. We hope these tips help you feel more comfortable and confident as you begin your life in the United States.

BE OPEN TO NEW EXPERIENCES

Culture shock typically occurs in stages. Knowing what to expect can help foster a smoother transition.

- **Build a Support Network:** Building connections with people helps reduce feelings of isolation, boost confidence, and foster a sense of belonging.
- **Self-Care:** Maintaining consistent routines (sleep, diet, exercise) can help to reduce stress and foster stability during periods of transition. **Creative outlets** such as journaling and daily reflection can also allow you to process difficult emotions, recognize progress, and acknowledge your strength.
- **Maintain Home Ties:** Regular contact with family and friends back home can help ensure emotional stability, acting as a buffer against isolation and feelings of loneliness.

UNDERSTAND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Understanding societal differences can help you to transform confusing, frustrating, or “wrong” situations into understandable, manageable, and even interesting experiences.

- **Contextualizes Behaviors:** Rather than interpreting a local practice as lesser-than, understanding it through their cultural context (like social values or history) can help you make sense of it.
- **Reduces Misunderstandings:** Understanding the norms allows you to anticipate, accept, or avoid conflicts in daily life, such as in communication styles or social etiquette.
- **Boosts Confidence & Agency:** By proactively learning about the host culture (through language, customs, or speaking with locals), you regain a sense of control over your environment.
- **Allows for Objective Evaluation:** It enables you to see the "why" behind your own reactions, allowing you to distinguish between what you truly dislike and what is simply new.
- **Facilitates Emotional Transition:** Understanding that sadness or irritability are normal reactions to change enables you to manage your emotions rather than being overwhelmed by them.

MANAGING DAILY LIFE

Getting around in the U.S. can look different depending on where you live. Research your options:

- **Public Transportation:** Buses, subways, or trains (commonly available in larger U.S. cities)
- **Rideshare Services:** Apps like Uber and Lyft are widely used and can be convenient, especially in the earlier stages of U.S. arrival
- **Walking & Biking:** Areas may be walkable or bike-friendly—A cost-effective option for short distances
- **Carpooling:** Considering sharing rides with fellow staff, roommates, or friends

Budget your Expenses: Managing your finances is an important part of living in the U.S. Common monthly costs include housing (rent + utilities), food/groceries, transportation, phone plan, and personal expenses such as clothing, activities, etc. Consider using a simple **budgeting app** such as [YNAB](#) or [Rocket Money](#).