

# 3 Tips to Make the Most of Research Abroad

BY VSC223 | MAY 3, 2018



DISCOVERY MODEL  
INTERCULTURAL



HISTORICAL



PROFESSIONAL



ENVIRONMENTAL



SOCIOPOLITICAL

**Veronica Scott is a student at the University of Kentucky. She is an ISA Featured Blogger and is currently studying abroad with ISA EuroScholars in Leuven, Belgium.**

“Going abroad changes you.” Whether for two weeks or two years, these words seem to be the inevitable message of anyone who crosses their country’s border. However, while this seems to be the shared mantra of travelers everywhere, the reason you go abroad in the first place can dramatically shape both your experience and what you bring home with you. In my case, I was lucky enough to research abroad with [KU Leuven University](#) in Belgium through the [Euroscholars](#) program, which differed in many ways from a more traditional [study abroad](#) program. That said, here are three ways to make the most of research abroad, should you choose that avenue:

## 1. Know Your Lab Long Before You See It

Most students will look online to find a lab, apply, then wait and hope they are selected by the lab in return. I’d encourage a more proactive method: email alumni and professors. Even if every opportunity is amazing, some labs will be more suited to your expectations and goals.

When I was first creating my [application](#), I emailed several [alumni](#) to get their feedback on the various [universities](#). This feedback completely altered which labs I applied to.

I also sent a cover letter with my interests, goals, and top lab picks to the program. When a professor wrote back, we were able to Skype and discuss my questions and his projects.

In other words, by the time you arrive in your host country, you should already know all about the lab you’re working for.

## 2. Join every Facebook group/page known to man (...or at least to the university)

It can be overwhelming when you first arrive at a university in another country, but you shouldn’t have to feel like a freshman again. If you have any personal interests or hobbies, find a university [Facebook](#) group for it. Find the page for the International Students Office and “like” it. Keep an eye on “pages liked by this page.” Even local “buy-sell” groups can help you find that cheap lamp you need for your dorm! So...

**LIKE ALL THE PAGES**



It may seem like overkill, but every event you know about is an opportunity to learn or meet people, and many of these events are easily found on Facebook. Use it.

### 3. Remember Your Goal(s)

If you're researching abroad, there's a good chance that your long-term goal is graduate school. Therefore, keep in mind that the professor you're researching under could be your best recommendation and one of your most critical mentors. Give 100% in the lab, communicate clearly, and network with those in your field.

Don't JUST network within your field, though. One of the biggest benefits of going abroad is creating an international network of friends. While you may miss your friends back in the U.S., having friends in many places is helpful and fun. Would you rather plan a trip to Poland in the dark, or would you rather have a friend there to see and a house to stay at? Build a family—sometimes that's where you learn the most.



*Here I am sitting in a window of the Castle Museum in Budapest, where I went with several friends for a trip over Easter Break. Like I said, everything is better with good people!*