

# Vis a Vis

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## Did You Know ...?

- Children who have spent much of their lives abroad are called third-culture kids (TCK)
- 24% of these children have multiple passports
- Third-culture kids overwhelmingly engage in relationships with others who have lived abroad
- 51% of third-culture kids are trilingual
- Third-culture kids have delayed adolescent rebellion
- Due to their experiences, third-culture kids have a highly developed worldview
- There are currently over one million youth living abroad
- After completing high school, many third-culture kids continue to study abroad

Source: Interaction International

## International Schools: A Refuge for Children Abroad

*A girl sits in the middle of a living room crying because she has no one to play with. . . A young boy plays alone because he can not understand the other kids in the park. . . A teenager is unhappy with her meal because she could not read the menu. . . Adolescence can be a difficult time, and experiences such as these can add to the already stressful lives of children living abroad.*

Parents are not the only ones who feel the pressures of relocating. Children often times have the same stresses in addition to their own concerns and dilemmas.

Adolescents often feel doubly foreign when attempting to adjust to life abroad. Adolescence is the time when they are most likely to question authority. American culture teaches young girls to be individualistic and independent. Although resisting authority is tolerated in places like the United States, many cultures, such as in Western Europe and Arab nations, fiercely discourage this defiance. A young girl might want to start exploring her individual identity or her sexuality by wearing clothing which, in places like the Middle East, might be highly inappropriate.

Often parents are so overwhelmed by

their own anxieties about moving abroad, they forget to consider the special circumstances of their children. Parents might assume that the whole family is dealing with the same issues. The truth is that children abroad are in a world of their own. They are different in more ways than one. The differences can be in appearance, personality, interests, etc. However, children should know and parents should remind them that being different is not all bad. Most importantly, they should know that their differences will help develop their strengths and recognize that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. International schools will be that light.



In each region of the world, international schools promote differences. For example, Western Europe offers The American School of Paris. Kindergartners to first-year university students help create a salad bowl of cultures. The international school encourages the idea of language diversity and asks students to introduce their cultures at fairs, special events, and

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cultural courses. Developing adolescents can then learn how to form a global view and perspective, which will allow for cultural diversity and tolerance.

Southeast Asia offers the American School of Borneo which also feeds on the highly diverse cultural surroundings. School programming emphasizes nature, respect of Earth's creations, and an understanding of life in all forms. Though named an American school, it is truly the contrary. The teachers are mostly American, but not the students. Australian, Japanese, European, and American children make up an environment that creates a body of students that incorporate not only their own culture but the skills to alter and adapt to new ones.

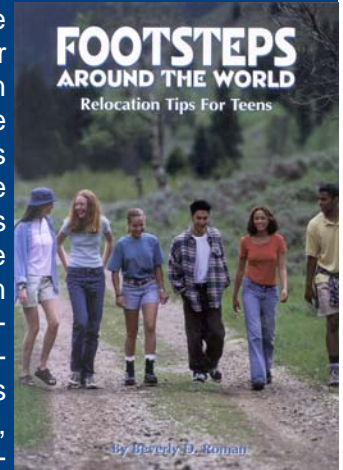
Often the child's experience in international schools makes them the expert in their family on how to survive abroad. They are more proficient in the language and culture. Their status as "different" actually becomes the light that guides their whole family through their new lives abroad.

It is important to realize that the needs of these "forgotten" expats must be met in order for the family to live successfully abroad. The international schools as well as cross cultural training can help ease the transition and emphasize the positive aspects of their sojourn.

- Roy Ferrill and Nadia Kamar

## Children Abroad: Suggested Reading

"Footsteps Around the World: Relocation Tips for Teens" by Beverly D. Roman, is a useful guide and workbook for youth who want to be proactive during their transition abroad. The author allows teens to take certain aspects of the move into their own hands by providing relocation checklists and timetables, as well as activities that focus on the emotional aspect of relocating.



This book is an easy and enjoyable read due to the creative use of icons, textboxes and multiple lists of useful tips. Topics covered include visualizing a successful move, making new friends while remembering the old, learning customs and manners of the host country, and repatriation. Also provided is a list of teen appropriate websites. "Footsteps Around the World" is a must read for youths because it empowers them during the relocation process.

- Jennifer Corley



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