



Top 10 Reasons for Asian Americans to Study Abroad

The face of America is rapidly changing, so is the rest of the world. Historically, many different ethnicities have had a major influence on shaping the United States. Asian and Pacific Islander cultures are no exception. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Asian population in the U.S. is projected to grow more than 200 percent in the next fifty years, from 3.8 percent to 8 percent. Furthermore, the Census Bureau also predicts that by the year 2100, ethnic minority groups in the United States will make up 60 percent of our country's population, with a significant number being of Asian origin.

Everywhere diversity is increasing. There is a growing importance for students in the U.S. to travel and study in other countries. The chance to live and study in another culture will provide you with the ultimate learning experience, as well as the perfect opportunity to get out and explore the world. With the realities of globalization today, the options Asian and Asian Pacific Islander students have for studying abroad are endless. Whether you choose to study in Barcelona or Beijing, Guatemala or Ghana, Delhi or Dublin, to explore your heritage or to immerse yourself in a different culture, studying abroad will be an experience that will change the way you see the world.

There are countless reasons why you should participate in a study abroad program. Here are our top ten....

1. See the world and broaden your experience

There are so many amazing things to experience around the world. You can see different natural landscapes and climates that do not exist in America. There are historical landmarks in every country that helped shape the history of the globe. You can expand your knowledge of the world by actually being there, seeing it, touching it, and experiencing it. Pictures in text books simply do not do justice to standing under the Eiffel Tower or on the Great Wall of China. Is there a place or landmark you have always wanted to see? This is how you can understand the world in a direct, all-encompassing way.

2. Gain a new perspective on your own country

In 1949, James Baldwin, the renowned African-American writer, wrote in *Notes of a Native Son*, "From the vantage point of Europe [the American student] discovers his own country." Learning about your own country by living abroad remains extremely relevant today as we continue to further our understanding of other cultures. Of course, studying abroad isn't limited to Europe - you have the opportunity to study in just about every corner of the globe. In Botswana or Tanzania, Italy or Thailand, you will learn about the U.S. from a new and different perspective. As a college student, there is no better time to see the world and be exposed to new things. These experiences will shape the rest of your life.



3. Explore your heritage

Getting in touch with your family's heritage can be another strong motivation to study abroad. Many minority students, particularly Asian Pacific Americans, report tremendous educational and personal benefits from exploring countries where their families have roots. Has your family recently emigrated to the U.S. or have they lived here for generations? Are you discovering your family's culture for the first time or interested in learning more? Studying abroad can provide you with the opportunity to learn about your own ethnicity and to explore your own identity. Many Asian-American students have traveled to Asia to get in touch with their heritage, and they have come back home with a new perspective on themselves as Americans and as Asian-Americans. Renowned Chinese American author Amy Tan explains what her experience in China meant to her. She says, "When my feet touched China, I became Chinese. I knew I was not totally Chinese, but I felt the connection nevertheless. It was a sense of completeness, like having a mother and a father. I had China and America, and everything was all coming together finally."

4. Improve your professional and financial potential

International experience is a critical and impressive part of any resume. In addition to the personal growth you'll undergo while overseas, the international and cross-cultural skills you'll develop will certainly expand your employment opportunities and, consequently, your income potential. Recognizing the link between international experience and career success is critical in today's workplace. Globally-minded employees are in high demand. Many companies seek out individuals with multi-lingual and multi-cultural experience and skills. Many Asian-American students who study abroad find that they are able to improve their language skills, giving them an instant advantage in the highly competitive workforce. Additionally, students can also take advantage of internships while they study abroad for an international work experience that is valued among U.S. employers. Your newly acquired skills will strengthen your resume in America's increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse workforce.

5. Become a full-time learner

While studying abroad you will have the opportunity to truly become a full-time student. Traveling outside the United States will be an education in itself. Many students who go abroad report that in addition to enjoying and learning in their classes during the week, they learn some of the most valuable lessons outside of the classroom. Weekend excursions to museums and cultural sites also add to your academic and personal growth. You learn to interact with people who may not necessarily think or communicate like you. While in a foreign country, even mundane activities – like shopping for groceries – become educational experiences.

A decorative border of small globe icons surrounds the text. The top row consists of 20 globes. The left and right sides each have a vertical column of 15 globes. The bottom row consists of 20 globes.

6. Gain new insights and outlooks through new relationships

Relationships formed while studying abroad might become some of the deepest friendships you will ever develop. You will have the opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds and cultures, and some of these people may even become life-long friends. Study abroad returnees often report meeting others with whom they expected to have no common ground, and then discovering that, despite being from different parts of the globe, they have much in common and much to learn from one another. As an Asian-American student, you may also meet other minority students similar to yourself who can share with you their experiences and give you the support you need while living abroad. These relationships, insights, and outlooks are a critical part of the study abroad experience.

7. Fight stereotypes by educating others

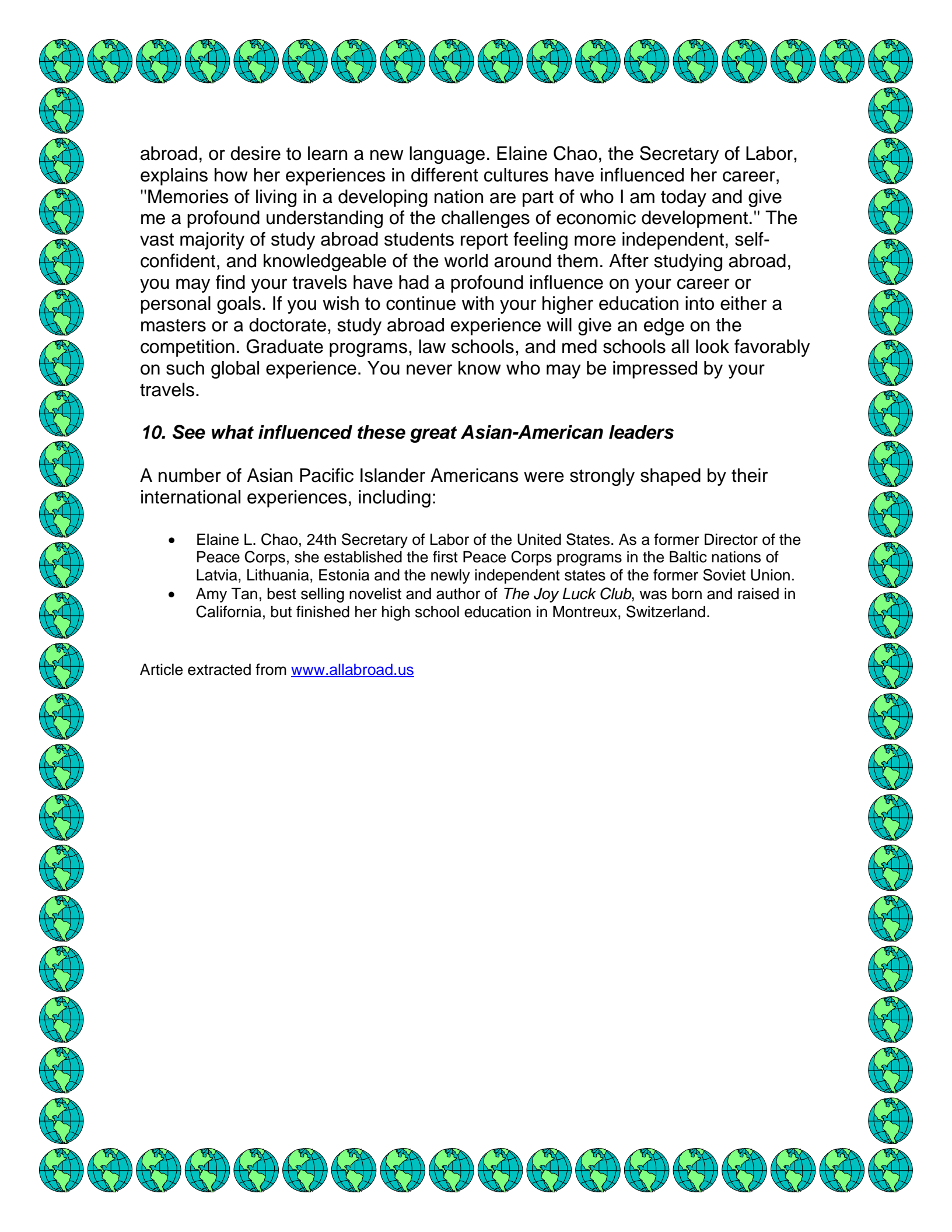
There is a challenge Asian Pacific Islander American students face abroad. Many other cultures only have experience with Asians through the media (i.e. movies, television, music, etc.). Asian-American students may become frustrated when the same stereotypes from home follow them overseas. However, this is also a unique opportunity to educate others about who you are as an individual and as a group. You can illustrate your own experiences in the United States in comparison to what others see and hear. This is your chance to be an individual, as well as a representative of your culture, and to encourage positive understanding of global diversity.

8. Dispel your own stereotypes

Frederick Douglass, the renowned abolitionist of the 19th century, once said “Men who travel should leave their prejudices at home.” In addition to serving as a cultural ambassador to dispel other’s misconceptions, studying abroad gives you a chance to break down some of your own stereotypes about other countries and peoples. Not only will you have the chance to immerse yourself in another culture, you will also meet people from different backgrounds and make personal connections with people whom you may have never expected. If traveling to your family’s native country, you may be surprised to find that you in fact don’t know everything about your own culture – ideas you have about yourself and your culture might be inaccurate. The only way to know for certain is to go.

9. Take control of your future

During your time abroad, you will be exposed to countless different experiences that may influence the rest of your life. Some students even end up changing their major or career path as a result of the new things they learn from being abroad. Others discover a newfound passion for travel, decide they want to work



abroad, or desire to learn a new language. Elaine Chao, the Secretary of Labor, explains how her experiences in different cultures have influenced her career, "Memories of living in a developing nation are part of who I am today and give me a profound understanding of the challenges of economic development." The vast majority of study abroad students report feeling more independent, self-confident, and knowledgeable of the world around them. After studying abroad, you may find your travels have had a profound influence on your career or personal goals. If you wish to continue with your higher education into either a masters or a doctorate, study abroad experience will give an edge on the competition. Graduate programs, law schools, and med schools all look favorably on such global experience. You never know who may be impressed by your travels.

10. See what influenced these great Asian-American leaders

A number of Asian Pacific Islander Americans were strongly shaped by their international experiences, including:

- Elaine L. Chao, 24th Secretary of Labor of the United States. As a former Director of the Peace Corps, she established the first Peace Corps programs in the Baltic nations of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union.
- Amy Tan, best selling novelist and author of *The Joy Luck Club*, was born and raised in California, but finished her high school education in Montreux, Switzerland.

Article extracted from www.allabroad.us