

The ups and downs of global traveling

■ **Two recent books look at pursuing a foreign assignment and following customs in Asia.**

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During my first and only trip abroad, I discovered — on the bus ride from the airport to the hotel — that I suffer from chronic motion sickness. I'll spare the details, but the authors of these two books have a hard time convincing me that I should travel and work in a foreign country in order to get ahead.

Though suitably skeptical, I read both books with an open mind.

Getting Ahead By Going Abroad. C. Perry Yeatman and Stacie Nevadomski Berdan. Collins. 242 pages

First, I took the quiz in Chapter 2 ("Is Going Global Right For You?") and not surprisingly, answered "no" to most of the questions, so I concluded that going abroad is not for me. But I've worked mostly for nonprofits, which is not the main focus of this book, though they do address it in a small aside on page 86, stating that government and nonprofit jobs most often do not offer financially comparable packages that make going abroad worthwhile.

But if you work for a large company in the private sector, the authors maintain that seeking international experience could be the best way to get ahead faster than your peers in the states. This assertion makes sense because one assumes that most people would opt to stay stateside because of family, housing and community ties. Volunteering to go abroad could communicate to management that the worker values their company, job and career above all else. A

person willing to relocate (possibly with their spouse and children) shows ambition, drive and dedication. A woman who chooses this path stands out even more, since the sexist assumption that females are more concerned with family than career is still sadly prevalent.

This book takes you step by step through making the initial decision to pursue a foreign assignment to working your way back into the American workforce. They cover what needs to be considered before accepting an assignment, what to do (and pack) before you get there, and how to maintain your personal life while overseas. The authors do a wonderful job of answering the multitude of questions any woman would have before taking this very big step. I especially valued the "Traveling Safely" section on page 140 and the list of "the Paradoxes of Life as an Expat," both packed with tips on behavior as an expatriate living and traveling abroad. Their smart advice is accompanied by "Making It Real" stories from a panel of women who made it to the top of their fields, presumably by going abroad.

Did Yeatman and Nevadomski convince me that going abroad is not only worthwhile, but is a smart career move? Even though this path is not for me, they did succeed in making their points and proposing a plan to achieve career success by gaining work experience in other lands. Other young women who are considering working abroad will find this to be a very useful place to begin their journey.

Asian Business Customs and Manners: A Country by Country Guide. Mary Murray Bosrock. Meadowbrook Press. 372 pages.

Doing business in Asia?

Each country on the continent is covered in this book, with top-line information including relevant statistics, language, dining, manners, dress and culture. An "Especially for Women" section for each country is an important feature because of the varied roles and social status of women in Asia. Bosrock, who lives and works in Miami part of the year, also provides background information about the region as a whole with a terrific "Ten Commandments of Visiting Asia." I enjoyed reading about the diverse religious practices.

Of particular value to travelers are tips on dining etiquette, body language and social situations, since culture and customs can vary widely from place to place. For example, in Japan, she writes, "upon meeting, people may fall silent for several minutes... To them, a person who can't interpret the silence is insensitive." On the other hand, in the Philippines, someone may inquire if you have eaten, but they really are asking how you are (to which the author recommends always replying "yes"). I highly recommend this book for international business travelers.

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