



The United States – A Country of Extremes!

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Because there are so many aspects of American life that are both universal and unique, the United States can be an easy place to fit in and yet a tough place to know.

Although America prides itself on its diversity, the number of commonalities amongst Americans may amaze newcomers. It is *how* these very different people come together that speaks more for America's success in diversity than the mere fact that they live in the same country. People of all different backgrounds work and attend school together, and, for the most part, speak the same language – though with unique regional dialects.

Americans are famous for being friendly and easygoing, but it does not mean that making friends here is easy – and is often quite difficult. This relaxed attitude may be misleading, especially since Americans are pressed to succeed in both their career and family lives. Both work and leisure activities may be equally demanding.

The official language in the United States is English, and most Americans only speak English. Due to the increasing Hispanic populous, Spanish has become an unofficial second language in the United States. In fact, all official announcements in the Miami International Airport are in English & Spanish! Most public schools do not have extensive bilingual education programs to assist foreigners.

In the United States spouses of assignees usually cannot work or make money in any way, but in cases where a spouse possesses an L2 visa, there are exceptions. Even if a spouse can work, there are often varying professional standards, so one may not be able to get proper work in the field they were trained.

If relocating with children, the United States has good child care options, but they are costly, and keep in mind that an assignee's native tongue will probably not be spoken. If one is active in a church, mosque or synagogue in their home country, this is an excellent way to meet new people in the United States, which has relatively high religious participation. Expats can easily become active in volunteer organizations, in their children's schools or by taking a language class.

The United States is a nation of extremes. Such differences and complex cultural issues can have an enormous impact on a family. However, if that family realistically appraises the differences in American life, and accepts them as part of daily existence; plus, brings along a sense of humor, an open mind, patience and a determination to know, understand and communicate with the American people, they should have an very enjoyable stay!