

## CASE STUDY

### **Travelling abroad as part of a Minority Group** **Rich Dunning, Deputy Head of Study Abroad**

*“As a gay man, I have always been mindful of the culture of the country that I’m visiting. Whilst it makes me sad that some countries and cultures aren’t as liberal as the UK, I wouldn’t want a lack of research or understanding on my part to put me in harm’s way.*

*On my Year Abroad in Brazil, I was acutely aware that, despite perceptions as a liberal country with regards to LGBTQ+ rights, there was (in 2007/8) still a high level of homophobia (and to this day Brazil has a very high level of transphobia). In fact the theme of Rio Pride 2007 was “Homofobia – criminalização já!” – LGBTQ+ people weren’t (and still aren’t) legally protected, at a federal level, against discrimination by law (although they do have many rights, such as marriage and family, and discrimination due to sexuality has been illegal in many states for a number of years). This meant I was always cautious as to who I gave my contact details to, as well as where and when I might meet up with people (and this was well before the days of apps!). I also made sure to research local bars, clubs and cafés that were gay-friendly so that I could meet likeminded people.*

*Today, when I travel with my husband, we always make sure to research attitudes and law towards the LGBTQ+ community in the country or countries we’re visiting. If we’re ever unsure or worried about the prevailing attitudes, we either don’t visit that country or we take practical steps, like booking twin rooms instead of double beds. We use resources like guide books (most good guide books have a section for LGBTQ+ travellers) and the FCO website (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-foreign-travel-advice>). It’s always good to get a guide book for the city or region you’ll be living in too, as attitudes can be vary widely between different areas of the same country (something my husband and I have discovered when travelling around the USA!). A good resource that I’ve discovered since working at the University are the Stonewall Global Workplace briefings (<http://www.stonewall.org.uk/global-workplace-briefings>). Whilst these are primarily geared towards people looking to work abroad, you can read some really valuable information on the legal status of LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as insights into cultural attitudes towards our community.*

*I’d obviously rather I didn’t have to worry at all about this, but it would be naïve of me to pretend otherwise. But it also doesn’t put me off travelling and I hope that it doesn’t put you off Study Abroad either, Study Abroad was the best thing that I did during my degree and still plays a huge role in my life today. Instead I make informed choices about where I spend my time and have realistic expectations as to what my experiences abroad may be like.”*