Working Abroad - Short Term

Working abroad can be a rewarding professional and cultural experience, but it can also be logistically challenging. Consider why you want to work abroad. Are you wanting to travel and experience new cultures? Is this a part of your long-term professional career goal? Are you looking to help others? There are all sorts of legitimate answers, but they will take you on different paths and to different types of employment.

Considerations
Whatever your goals, consider the following factors:

Visa Requirements, Passport, and Background checks
In order to legally reside and work in another country for an extended period of time, you will need some form of work visa. The specifics of how to get one and what kind you need vary by country. Oftentimes your employer or sponsoring institution will help you with this process, but you are responsible for knowing the stipulations of your visa and legal status. The process of assembling, submitting, and processing documentation for a visa can take time and may even involve a federal background check, so plan ahead. Also be sure that you have a valid passport—the federal government has been processing them faster these days, but it still takes time to get one.

Housing and Air Travel
Many programs and employers will offer assistance with finding housing, and some will provide it for you. Read any contract you receive carefully and make sure you understand your housing situation. Air travel can be more difficult. Some employers will offer to pay for the cost of your flight, but many volunteer and low-budget programs do not. Again, the key here is to plan ahead and to know the stipulations of your contract.

Health & Safety
Access to health care and laws protecting marginalized identity groups vary by country. You should do your research and try to find first-hand accounts of the lived experience of working in your target country. Check your current health insurance for international coverage and be sure to research what your host country or organization may provide.

Job Security
There are many unregulated or semi-regulated jobs and industries in the world. One scary but not wholly unheard of scenario is when someone accepts a job and flies out only to find that their employer is not as financially or institutionally established as they thought. They then find themselves suddenly unemployed in a foreign country with a work visa that is no longer valid. It is a bad scenario, but there are ways to avoid it. Research your employer ahead of time, talk to former or current employees, and make sure you know what you are getting into.

Application Timelines
The deadlines for submitting applications can vary by job and industry. Some established programs, like JET, require application materials to be submitted by September the year before you begin teaching there. Others accept applications year-round and can move quickly. On average, though, the process of researching, preparing for, and finding a job abroad takes longer than it does in the States. If working abroad is something you want to do, you should set your goals and research deadlines well in advance.
Resources and Links
Here is a selection of possibilities to start you dreaming and researching:

General information and opportunities
The International Programs Office at the University of Massachusetts Amherst offers resources for finding and applying to educational and internship opportunities abroad. This is a great first stop.

Fellowships and Scholarships
The Office of National Scholarship Advisement (ONSA) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst helps students identify and apply to nationally recognized scholarship and fellowships. Some of these scholarships offer students the opportunity to study and teach abroad.

Au Pair Positions
Au pair programs involve childcare and child supervision work in exchange for pay, room, and board in a variety of countries. The International Au Pair Association offers information about au pair programs and experiences. InstitutoHemingway offers hotel-industry and au pair jobs in Spanish-speaking countries.

Seasonal and Short-Term Agricultural Work
Seasonal and agricultural work programs pair applicants to local farms, orchards, and greenhouses. WorldWide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) is a cultural exchange and agriculture program that offers opportunities to work on organic farms across the world. OneWorld365 lists information about other agricultural programs. CCUSA offers information about international summer camp opportunities.

Volunteer and Aid Work
The Peace Corps and the United Nations Volunteers Program place volunteers to do aid and humanitarian work around the world.

Teaching English Abroad
Teaching English is one of the most common and accessible ways for Americans with a university degree to travel and work abroad. Depending on country and job type, the pay for English teachers can be very small to lucrative. Daves ESL Café (and its forums) is an excellent resource for learning about the industry and for finding work. The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET) is an established and highly regarded teaching exchange program offering U.S. citizens English language teaching opportunities in Japanese public schools.

Work Exchange Programs
Work exchange programs offer applicants opportunities to work overseas in exchange for housing, accommodations, and sometimes pay. The Alliance for International Exchange places applicants in professional, teaching, au pair, counselor, and other work exchange programs. Cultural Vistas is another good source for work exchange programs.

United Nations Job Boards
The United Nations Job Boards posts jobs and internships for a wide variety of jobs and locations. This is a good resource to not only find jobs, but also to get a sense of what career paths exists for international work. The International Organization Employment Information website offers an overview of the types of jobs and programs the UN and other international organizations have. See also UNICEF job boards.

Non-Profit Opportunities
Idealist.org lists thousands of international mission-driven organizations that may have short term work or volunteer opportunities. You can search for country or interest areas and contact them directly or see if they have posted opportunities on their websites (or listed on Idealist).