



A Foreign Service Career... In the Balance

by Shawn Dorman

PLUSES	MINUSES
Having the chance to serve your country and make a difference	Having to endorse policies with which you may disagree
Witnessing history in the making	History in the making can be dangerous
Changing jobs every few years	Changing jobs every few years
Having the chance to think and write about current world issues	Often feeling that what you write goes into a black hole
Traveling to amazing places	Getting amazing illnesses
The chance to live in off-the-beaten-path countries	Actually living in off-the-beaten-path countries can be difficult
Diplomats are usually treated with high regard overseas	You belong to and represent the U.S. government 24 hours a day overseas; anything you say can be taken as an official statement
Access to important, interesting people	Most people want something from you
Wonderful colleagues, esprit de corps	Some truly rotten managers
Learning new things every day	Things may never get totally comfortable
You'll rarely be bored in a job	By the time you know what you're doing, it's time to move on
You gain a world perspective	You no longer entirely "fit in" back home
Each assignment takes you into the unknown	Each assignment takes you into the unknown
You could be ambassador someday	You probably won't ever be ambassador
Your spouse/partner can find unusual and interesting work opportunities overseas	Your spouse/partner will probably not have consistent work and his/her career will come second to yours
Free housing overseas	You're on a government salary
The lifestyle encourages a close family	You are far from extended family and old friends and will miss "being there" for important events
You have friends all over the world	Your friends are always all over the world
You'll do things you never thought you'd do	There may have been good reasons for not doing some of those things
You'll have amazing stories to tell	Not many people will want to hear them
Foreign Service life is rewarding, challenging, and exciting	Almost no one back home will understand your life and your work

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