

Introduction:

This activity is designed for students who are studying abroad to familiarize them with their surroundings, encourage them to engage with locals, and connect objects they encounter in the city to the local culture.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Ask deeper questions and interact with members from a different culture.
2. Find culturally significant objects and places.
3. Seek out and articulate answers to questions about culturally specific objects and places in a way that reflects multiple cultural perspectives.

Time:

2 hours.

Group Size:

Entire group.

Materials:

Participant Instructions (in [Downloads](#)); a camera or cell phone with camera; means to travel locally; computer/internet access.

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance
- Adaptation

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:**Curiosity**

- To ask complex questions about other cultures.
- To seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

Openness

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

Activity Instructions:



1. Photos

- In Part 1, you will challenge participants to locate and memorialize at least 20 of the items listed below within a week or less. Participants must include a blend of items from Group A and Group B, but the selection is up to them.

SAFETY NOTE: Participants should always ask permission before taking photos of a local person. Keep in mind that in some cultures, it is seen as inappropriate or rude to take photos, especially without permission. Also, some countries restrict or prohibit photographs of police stations, places of worship, museums, and government buildings. Before photographing the items marked with an asterisk, instruct participants to check a good guidebook of the destination location, or ask a trusted local person about photo etiquette in the country.

- When participants are finished with the photoshoot, instruct them to post their photos and a short caption in the group discussion board for feedback from their peers and mentor.

Group A—Find and take a photo of the following:

- Local bank
- Local hospital
- A place to get cell phones/calling cards
- Pharmacy or place you can get medicine
- Youth hostel or closest cheap hotel where friends could visit
- A public park
- A public garden or zoo
- A body of water (pond, stream, canal, river, reservoir, etc.)
- A vegetarian restaurant
- A church, temple, mosque, or synagogue*
- Something with a tower
- One of the oldest buildings in town
- A theater
- A used bookstore
- A local coffeehouse
- A concert hall
- A train station
- Local police station*
- Local post office*
- A place that really surprised you

Group B—Take a selfie while:

- Riding public transportation
- Purchasing something at a local grocery store
- Touring a museum and photographing an interesting exhibit
- Purchasing a cheap souvenir with the city name on it
- Speaking with a local person*
- Eating something you cannot get in your home university town
- Touring a factory* or other business*
- Ice-skating or roller-skating
- Taking a river cruise, ferry, or water-taxi
- Riding in a cable car or a helicopter



*Instruct participants to check a good guidebook of the destination location or ask a trusted local person about photo etiquette in the country before photographing these items.

2. The cultural context

- Instruct participants to identify one of the items they captured in their photoshoot that seems to be particularly representative of the culture (such as a museum, means of transportation, or public space).
- Instruct participants to then find at least two different individuals who are from the destination country and ask them about the significance of this item for the culture. (Example: What does the Eiffel Tower tell us about French culture? Is the rickshaw still an important emblem of Asian culture?)
- Instruct participants to then post an essay of 300-500 words that answers the following questions:
 - Which item did you investigate as a cultural item? Why did you choose this item to investigate?
 - What did you learn about it? What was your reaction to this information?
 - What insights did you gain into deep culture (values, beliefs, philosophy, religion, etc.) from your interviews with cultural informants? What was your emotional response to these insights?
 - What does this cultural artifact, or the relationship between it and deep culture, remind you of in your hometown/home culture?
 - Will you explore this aspect of the culture further, and if so, how, or why?

3. Dialogue with peers

- Instruct participants to review the postings from other students in the group and reply with curiosity questions to their peers' essays. They must ask at least two questions and respond to each question posed to them.

Related Tools:

- [Grocery Store Ethnography](#)
- [Working in Unfamiliar Surroundings Quiz](#)