Living Like a Local

Maximizing Immersion and Integration During Study Abroad

Office of Study Abroad, Tulane University
What does “immersion” mean to you?
4 analogies for viewing culture

- Iceberg
- Onion
- Fish Bowl
- Lenses
Four Core Intercultural Competencies

Self-Awareness: Increasing cultural and personal self-awareness through reflecting on our own experiences past and present.

Cultural Literacy: Increasing awareness of others within their own cultural and personal contexts.

Managing Emotions: Learning to manage our emotions and thoughts in the face of ambiguity, change, and challenging circumstances and people.

Cultural Bridging: Learning to bridge cultural gaps by shifting our frames and adapting our behavior to unfamiliar and challenging cultural contexts.
Intercultural Development Continuum

- Deeply Comprehends Difference
- Bridges across Difference
- Intercultural Mindset
- Adaptation
- Acceptance
- Minimization
- Polarization
- Denial
- Monocultural Mindset
- Cultural Disengagement Scale
- Sense of disconnection from a primary cultural community

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Modified from the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), M. Bennett, 1986
Suspending Judgement: Interpreting your local context

1) Describe This Image.
2) Interpret this Image.
3) Evaluate this image.
4) Re-evaluate based on all interpretations heard within the group.
*Image is of Semana Santa in Sevilla.
Getting the immersed through understanding your program structure

- Direct Enroll
- Hybrid
- Island
Language Immersion

Tips:

- Language contracts?
- Make local friends
- Break out of the study abroad bubble
- Take note of the new vocabulary you learn each day and use it!
- Watch local TV
- Read the local paper
- Read novels set in your host country

❖ “Survival Language Skills”
Housing: Using your living arrangements to further your immersion and integration

- Homestays
- Apartments: (US students, international students)
- Dorms
- Living Learning Communities
Immersion in the Local Community

- Local routines (favorite cafes, neighborhood traditions)
- To travel or not to travel
- University clubs
- How does digital/social media work in your host country?
- Get involved with local NGOs
- Learn about the local political system
- Break out of the study abroad bubble
- Develop your independence
- Learn about religious and faith traditions
- Learn the professional sports teams
- Who are the major artists/musicians in your host city?
Immersion vs Intrusion: Power and Privilege during Study Abroad

How can we be conscious about the difference?

How do we ensure that our presence leaves a positive footprint on the communities we visit?
Your Host Country: Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions

- Small power distance
- Individualism
- Masculinity
- High uncertainty avoidance
- Long-term orientation
- Indulgence
- Big power distance
- Collectivism
- Femininity
- Low uncertainty avoidance
- Short-term orientation
- Restraint
Your Host Country

- What do you currently know about your host country?
- What cultural differences are you expecting to observe?
- How do you think your own identity might be challenged or might affect how you navigate your immersion experience in your host country? (gender, race, socioeconomic status, nationality, etc)
Goals to Maximize Your Engagement with the Local Community

Understand Create
Identify Coordinate
Use Made
decisions about
Critique Connect
Manage Identify the interaction
between Solve Relate
Assess Compare
Judge Integrate
Imagine Identify the
similarities/differences Analyze
Interact with others regarding
Calculate Value

GOALS:
1.
2.
3.