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# InterCultural Focus

## Study Abroad Tips

Many travelers go through different stages in relating to a new culture. One of the more simple models to describe this process:

- The **excitement** stage. Everything around you is new and exciting. An open-air market appears picturesque, the vendors seem lively, the food for sale smells fragrant & tastes exotic.
- The **disillusioned** stage. You have the same experiences as before, but now you make a negative assessment, not a positive one. The same open-air market now seems to have become run down and chaotic, the vendors seem aggressive or obnoxious; the food has become gross. **Culture shock** may be a factor at this stage.
- The **balanced** stage. With time, you realize that there is as much good, and as much bad, in the new culture as in your home culture – they are just arranged and presented differently. Your anger and disappointment fade, and you realize that you can function effectively outside your home culture. It's clear that the open-air market is different from the store where you buy food at home, but you see that both have their advantages. The vendors are distinct from the grocery clerks at home, but they all get the job done. The food is indeed different from food at home, and you're glad you've tried so many new dishes.



## Culture Shock

- **Culture shock** is a name given to the collection of feelings that sometimes arise when travelers are overwhelmed by cultural differences. The symptoms can include feeling lonely, homesick, overwhelmed, fearful, angry, confused or judgmental.

## Developing Intercultural Competency

- Interventions help students increase their cultural self-awareness as well as their awareness of others (e.g., differences between their cultural values and those of another culture group).
- Cultural reflection results in greater cultural insight and an increase in students' intercultural competence.
- Immerse yourself in the culture through food,



traditions, music, and language. Be sure to go in-depth in understanding the culture to avoid stereotypes and debunk misconceptions.

- Pre-departure and reentry preparation directly focuses on cultural learning as opposed to *dos and taboos* or non-cultural learning (e.g., sights to see).
- Reflect on your experiences to make meaning of them.
- Components as most influential in building intercultural competence during study abroad: cultural mentoring, learning about experiences, active involvement in the cultural setting, pre-departure and re-entry preparation, and onsite cross-cultural interventions.