



INTERNATIONAL FIELDWORK

PREDEPARTURE BRIEFING

Cross Cultural Awareness

Overview of content

Three slide decks available:

1. Preparing to go
2. Cross culture – *this deck*
3. While you are away

- The importance of cross culture competency
- Taking photos & being respectful
- Reverse culture shock
- Resources



CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION & RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL



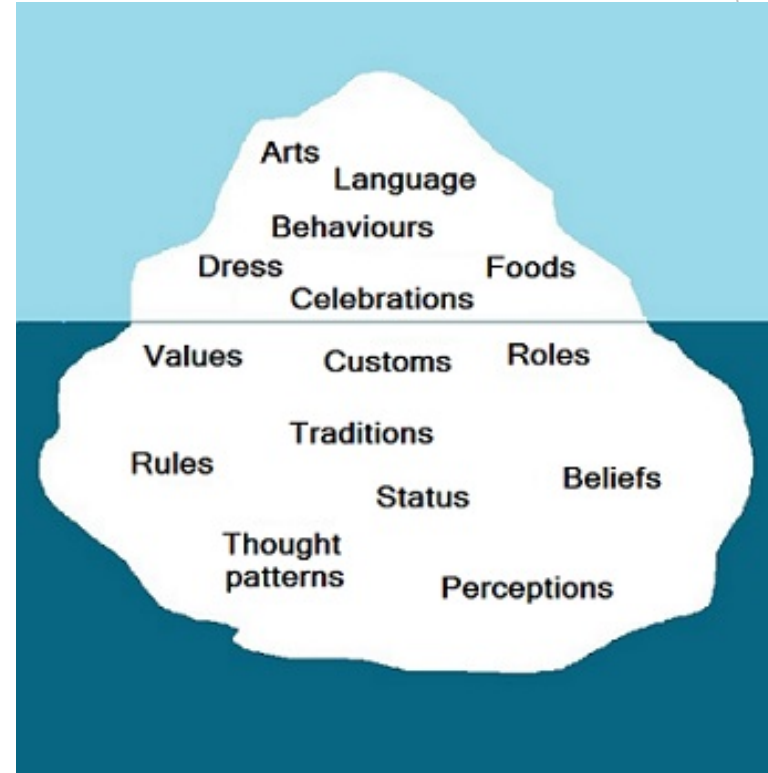
Importance of culture



Cultural iceberg

Shallow understanding of culture is to notice only the differences: Food, flags, dress, festivals etc..

Deeper understanding asks why there are differences and to what effect. I.e. History, politics, ethnic differences, region, religion, media, legal structure, families, housing, health and education.



Deeper understanding of culture becomes more useful to enable effective and sensitive communication and true cultural competence.

What is cultural competence?

Cultural competence is the ability to participate ethically and effectively in personal and professional intercultural settings.

It requires being aware of one's own cultural values and world view and their implications for making respectful, reflective and reasoned choices, including the capacity to imagine and collaborate across cultural boundaries.

Cultural competence is, ultimately, about valuing diversity for the richness and creativity it brings to society.

[University of Sydney's National Centre for Cultural Competence](#)

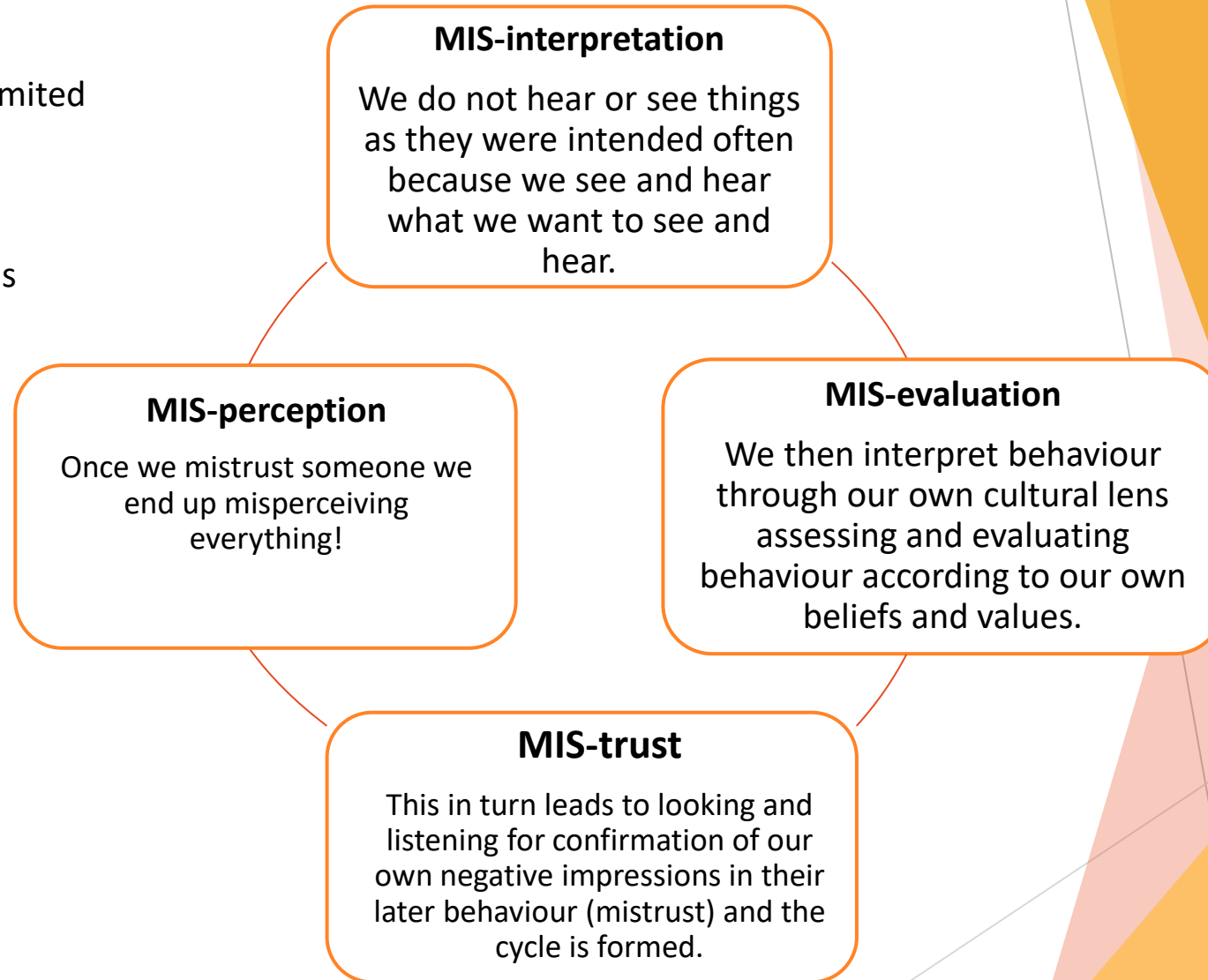


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The MIS Cycle

We fall easily into the MIS cycle with limited cultural competence.

The MIScycle is an important cultural framework where negative impressions unknowingly perpetuate the cycle.



How to avoid the MIS Cycle

A cultural lens is a perspective through which you view culture and how you can change your perspective.

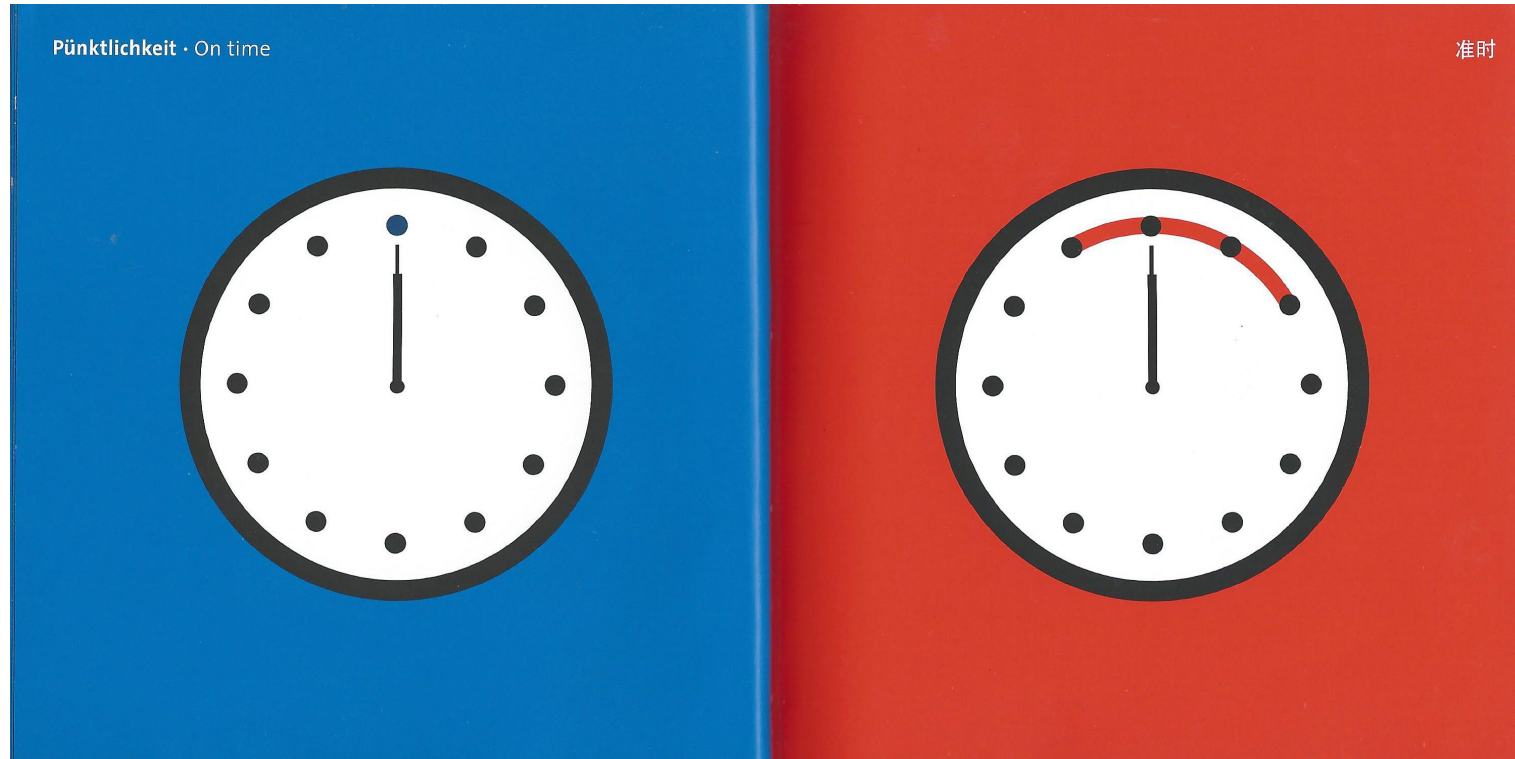
Your cultural lens is influenced by your language, beliefs and values, attitudes, ways of processing information, ancestral background, traditions, food, taboos, historical experience, artistic and technological progress and can be hard to shift.

However attention to your appreciation of cultural awareness will assist in ensuring you have a successful placement and form strong relationships.

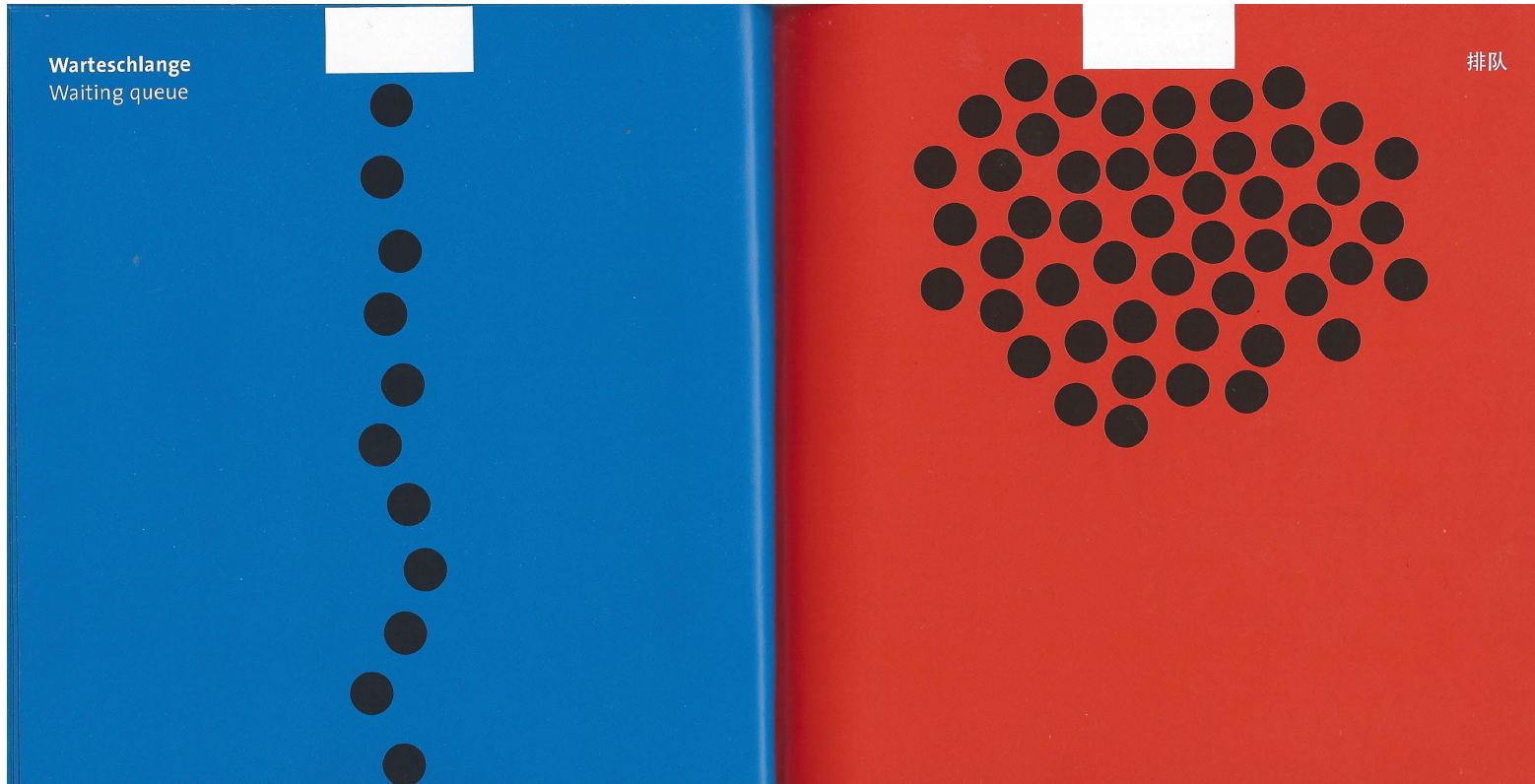
Regular reflection during your daily debriefs and writing in your journal will be important exercises allowing you to navigate through the differing cultural landscape you will be living and working in.



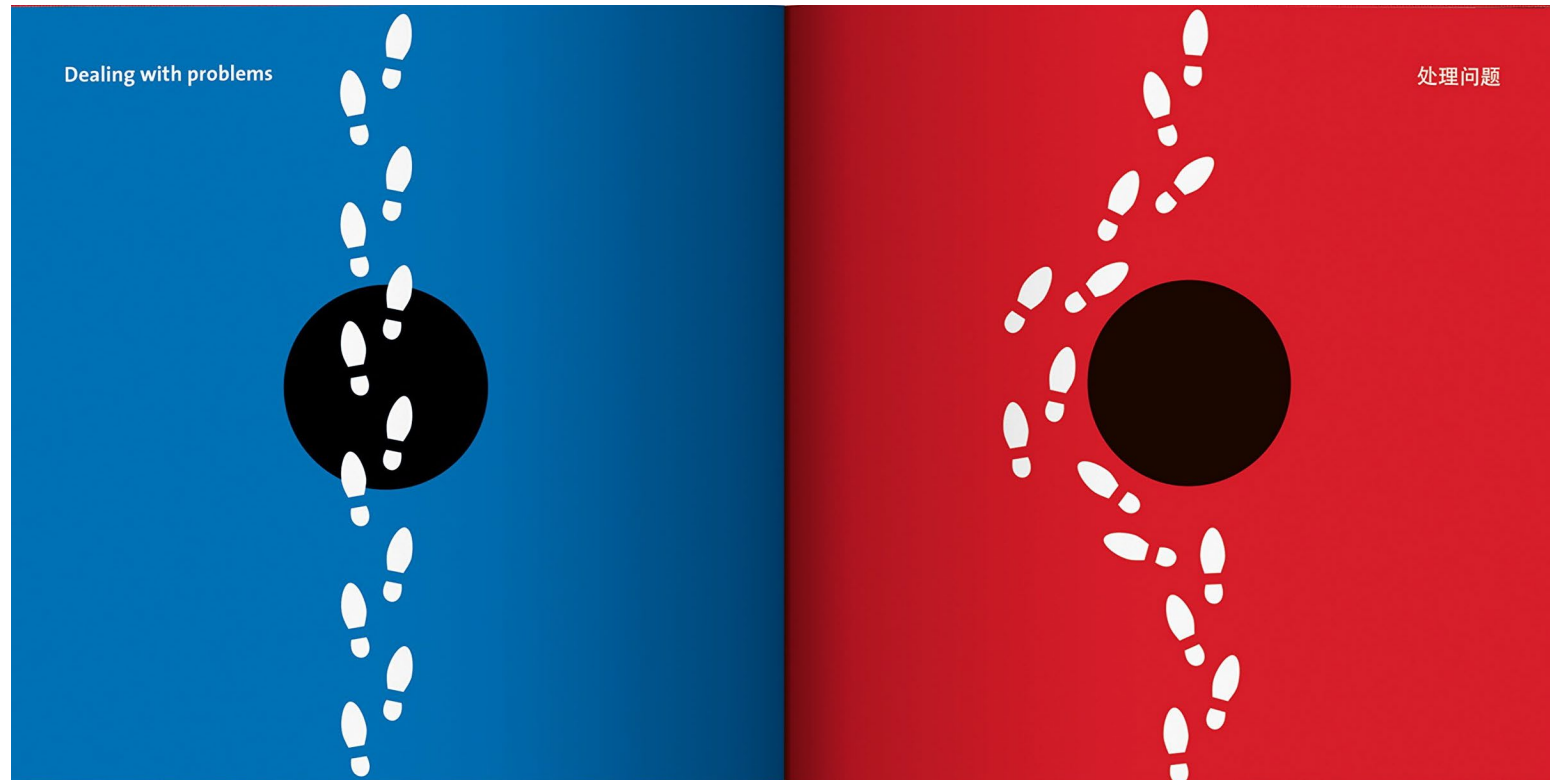
Cultural differences and how they are perceived



In this picture we are looking at the concept of time with the blue side depicting the punctuality we come to expect in Australia compared to the often more relaxed approach in Asia. Often things will happen when the time is right or when the most important people are present rather than an agreed time. As Australians and guests it is polite to always be on time according to what has been agreed but we also ask you to be patient and aware when events might not always start on time. If you wear an unadapted cultural lens you risk falling into the mis-cycle.



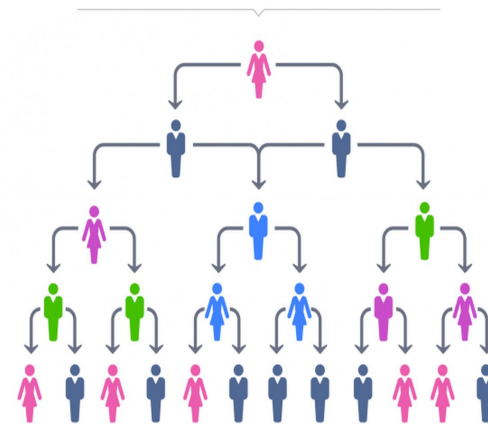
In this image we look at the concept of queuing. On the blue side we are familiar with forming a line in a shop or for the bathroom. On the right red side in Asia lining up is a foreign concept and people will build a relationship to get served first.



Looking at this image we are discussing communication and avoidance of conflict with the black dot in the centre representing some kind of conflict or issue. In Asia (the red side) harmony trumps all and conflict is avoided at all costs. You will gain respect quickly and form strong working relationships if you manage any conflict carefully and work hard to save face for all. Have a think about how you deal with conflict and whether this changes in different situations. Research some tools to help you navigate staying cool in a heated or frustration situation.

Cultural drivers as influencing factors on behaviour

1. Concept of Face (losing/giving)
2. Harmony
3. Collectivism
4. Hierarchy



Losing Face

- Exclusion / left out of group
- Shame on group
- Criticism of another person
- Disagreeing in public
- Referring to someone's mistake
- Asking questions of a superior
- Showing anger
- Saying a direct no



"The incident ... was done in a moment of folly, and for that we are truly sorry that we have hurt the feelings of Malaysians in general. We too have similar fondness and respect to our own Australian national flag, but due to our cultural differences our display of respect and reverence of our national flag is perhaps quite different."

- 'Budgie nine', 2016



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Giving face

- Acknowledgement & Appreciation
- Compliment
- Reciprocate kindness
- Show respect & trust
- Remember names and titles
- Do not criticize, challenge or embarrass
- Look for common things, it's not right or wrong, just different
- Show interest and be collaborative
- When posing a question use words like:
 - May I ask your opinion?
 - Can you teach me
 - Can you show me
 - Do you think?...



Culture shock and adaptation



https://youtu.be/g-ef-xhC_bU

There are going to be times when you will feel like a fish out of water...



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Expectations vs Reality

- Instagram – is it real?
- You will be stared at
- Overcrowded and limited personal space
- Different smells
- Excessive smog and pollution
- Poverty and difficult living conditions
- Culture shock
- Homesickness
- Upset stomach
- Anger and frustration at not doing enough



Practical strategies to adjust

- Work as a team, use the buddy system. *Look out for one another* 😊
- Show consideration & respect of all views
- Adopt the local way where possible & comfortable
- Respect local laws
- Dress appropriately & respectfully
- Learn the culturally appropriate greeting for your region – perhaps a nod of the head
- Pointing with your index finger is generally considered rude in Asia use your thumb instead
- *In all parts of Asia and the sub-continent, it is rude to use your left hand to accept anything, pay someone, or eat with.* Use your right hand. Never pay anyone with your left hand - recipient may fear misfortune.
- Never point the bottom of your shoe or foot at another person in Asia
- Avoid touching heads at all costs in Asia
- Debrief regularly with other students and help one another



Using photos

- Photos help us to remember what we were like when we took them.
- Something that's initially shocking when you arrive may become commonplace.
- Helps you to chart how you've grown, adapted, learned & become bi-cultural.
- Photos trace out your learning trajectory
- Print out copies of the [Talent Release Form](#) to get consent to publish pictures of individuals



Tips

- Be respectful – take cue when a photo taken is not wanted
- Be mindful when taking pictures of young children (*see Child Protection section*)
- Think twice before posting on social media – is it offensive, acceptable? Would I post it in Australia?

Reverse culture shock

- Although you've had a profound experience, other people may not see it
- The 'rite of passage' may have led to new skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviours & abilities
- You may not want to return to the 'way home was'
- Or simply find that other people are not interested in a profound experience
- Be kind to yourself
- Catch up with people you went away with regularly
- Visit a Chinese/Thai/Vietnamese/French restaurant



Summary

- Visible behaviours are often influenced by hidden values & beliefs that form our culture
- It is helpful to be aware of our own cultural lens and flip to new ones to understand new cultures
- Culture shock is normal and can be overcome
- Adapting to a new environment takes time & the pace of transition varies from person to person
- The importance of face & harmony in Asia
- The importance of reflecting & debriefing daily whilst away & on return to Australia



Resources

Curtin University

- [Travel Operations Portal](#)
- [Travel Approval](#)
- [Travel Facilitators](#)
- [Fieldwork Education Policy](#)
- [Fieldwork](#)
- [Fieldwork Preparation Online](#)
- [Fieldwork Forms](#)
- [Scholarship website](#)
- [Travel Insurance Brochure](#)
- [Travel Insurance Forms](#)
- [International SOS](#)
- [Curtin University Health Services](#)

The Global Society

- [The Global Society](#)
- [Top Packing Tips](#)
- [Staying Healthy on a Short-Study Program](#)

Australian Government

- [Smartraveller Visa Guide](#)
- [National Police Check](#)
- [Smartraveller](#)
- [Working With Children Check](#)

Other

- [University of Sydney's National Centre for Cultural Competence](#)