

# **From Diamonds in the Rough to Multi-Faceted Gems in Just a Few Weeks:**



## **Cultural Learning in Short-Term Study Abroad Programs**

### **Panelists:**

**Truett Cates, Austin College, [tcates@austincollege.edu](mailto:tcates@austincollege.edu)**

**Anne Mahoney, Oklahoma State University,  
[anne.mahoney@okstate.edu](mailto:anne.mahoney@okstate.edu)**

**Irene Ziegler, University of New Orleans, [iziegler@uno.edu](mailto:iziegler@uno.edu)**

## Cultural Learning On-site

### UNO Study Abroad:

1. Approx. 12,000 students at UNO
2. About 500 study abroad – majority guest students
3. 8 summer abroad programs, most in partnership with local university
4. 4-6 weeks, summer only
5. Program sizes range between 12 – 250 students
6. All UNO programs, no providers, 2 faculty-led
7. Most programs have staff on-site, incl. coordinator, academic director, student asst.



## Cultural Learning On-site

Some elements that work well for us:

1. Students from local partner university
2. Host families
3. Local guides with good knowledge of home culture and access to a network of experts
4. Contacts with Embassies/Consulates, Ministries, City Officials
5. Local instructors, lecturers, guest speakers
6. Focus on “Out-of-classroom” learning
7. Hire local staff and student assistants
8. Extra-curricular cultural excursions and activities





## Cultural Learning On-site

### 1. Students from local (partner) university

- Allow local students to participate in your classes
- To inform local students, contact study abroad office, colleagues in your field, former exchange students, etc.
- Arrange buddy system, airport pick-ups, language partners
- Set up meals with peers, sports events, cultural activities

#### Challenges:

Local students not around in summer  
Credit for local students in your classes  
Language Barrier  
Misunderstandings,  
Miscommunications

#### Rewards:

Peer Contact  
Learning from peers  
Language Learning  
Possibly Life-long friendship



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 1. Students from local (partner) university



Certificate Ceremony for US and Czech students, who completed the program in Prague

## Cultural Learning On-site

1. Students from local (partner) university

### Student Testimonial:

*“My contact with the Czech people was nothing short of wonderful, aside from a surly waiter or two and some pushy people on the trams. Since I came into the experience essentially culturally blind, I had no clue what to expect. I was included as part of the group (whether or not English was being spoken), welcomed into homes, and given a wonderful snapshot of what everyday life is like. It was not too far off from my own, which surprised me on one hand but didn't on the other.”*



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 1. Students from local (partner)



Lunch/Language Partner Program, Kyoto, Japan



## Cultural Learning On-site

1. Students from local (partner) university

### Student Testimonial:

*"The language partner program is an excellent way to become close friends with local Japanese students. My partner Yui helped me with my language skills and we saw a lot of Japan together. Making more friends abroad is the main reason I'm considering going again."*

## Cultural Learning On-site

### 1. Students from local (partner)



Japanese Calligraphy, taught by local students in Kyoto, Japan



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 1. Students from local (partner) university



Dinner with peers in Berlin, Germany and Vienna, Austria



## Cultural Learning On-site

1. Students from local (partner) university

### Student Testimonial:

*"The local students gave me the European perspective of the United States as well as the world. I also found it interesting that the European students were very knowledgeable about US history, even more so than most American students."*

## Cultural Learning On-site

### 2. Host Families and Home Stays

#### Challenges:

- May limit program in size
- Language requirement
- Safety and Quality checks
- Miscommunications, Mismatches

#### Rewards:

- Language Learning
- Real cultural immersion
- Possibly Life-long friendships



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 2. Host Families and Home Stays



Opening Ceremony with Host Families (=entertainers) in Costa Rica



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 3. Local guides with good knowledge of home culture and access to network of experts

- Find good, reliable local guides for meaningful city tours, excursions, and field trips
- Start with the tourist office, but look beyond as well. Be specific in your requests regarding English proficiency, educational content, etc.
- When you've found the right guide, treat him/her as the invaluable "gem" they are
- Use your guide as a resource to arrange other tours, speakers, special events, concerts, meals at his/her favorite restaurant, etc.



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 3. Local guides with good knowledge of home culture and access to network of experts

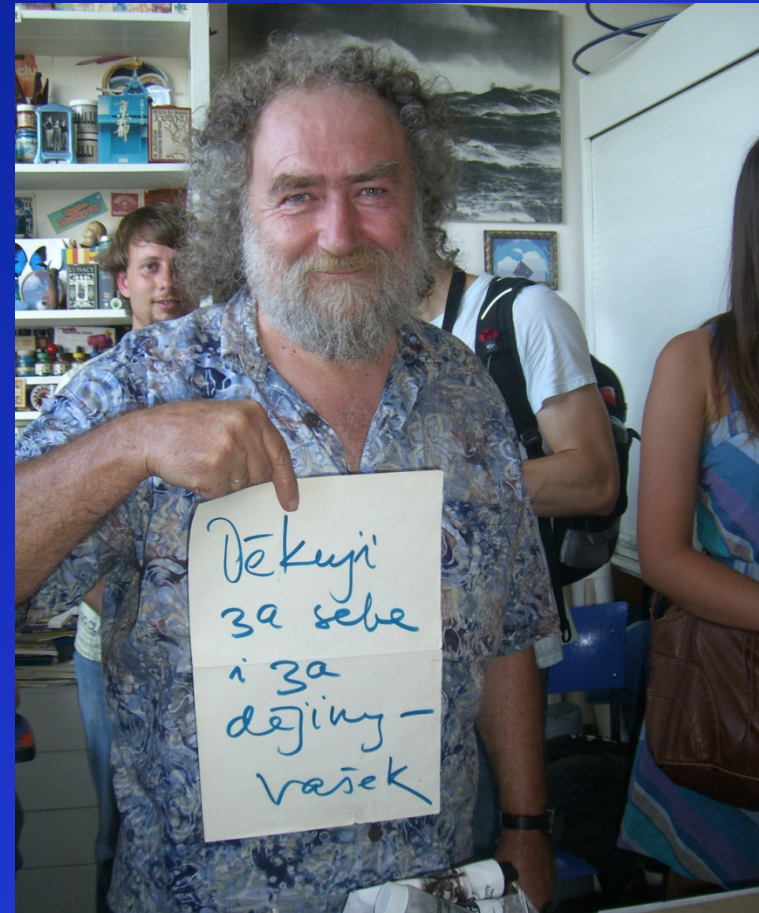


Local Guide Milos is one of the highlights of our program in Prague.



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 3. Local guides with good knowledge of home culture and access to network of experts



Local guides make history come alive.



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 4. Contacts with Embassies/Consulates, Ministries, City Officials

- Make contacts with Embassies and/or Consulates at home.  
Seek out the Cultural/Education Section and inform them of your programs/ events.
- Use these “home contacts” to approach officials abroad (American Embassy or Consulate, various Ministries, etc.)
- Ask to arrange student visits or invite them to your classes and events.
- Inform City officials of your program and ask to visit city hall and possibly meet the mayor.
- The Tourist Office might also be a good resource. Ask for contacts. They can further provide promotional materials, maps, etc.

## Cultural Learning On-site

### 4. Contacts with Embassies/Consulates, Ministries, City Officials



A visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague, including a special tour and Q & A with the Deputy Minister



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 4. Contacts with Embassies/Consulates, Ministries, City Officials



Students with the Mayor and other City Officials of Innsbruck, Austria.

## Cultural Learning On-site

### 5. Local instructors, lecturers, guest speakers

- Ask faculty members at your home institution about contacts with colleagues abroad.
- Establish contacts at the local university . Ask for speakers recommendations.
- Also look outside the academic realm. Ask your local guide, staff, etc.
- Establish a culture series with lectures, walking tours, dinners, etc. Decide if you can offer credit for this.
- Use guest speakers in academic courses.
- If you use a local instructor to teach a credit-bearing course, clearly state your expectations regarding grading, class attendance, etc.



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 5. Local instructors, lecturers, guest speakers



A lecture on Czech Music and Puppetry; a visit to an artist's studio; both part of our Czech Culture Series, offered once a week in the evenings.

## Cultural Learning On-site

### 5. Local instructors, lecturers, guest speakers

Student testimonial:

*“I was able to really appreciate the aspects of Prague that were completely foreign to me. The lecture series was really the biggest influence on opening my eyes in that regard. We saw what happened at a large country level, but also one individual’s perspective on the Czechs finally regaining their independence. ”*



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 6. Focus on “Out-of-classroom” learning

- Make class excursions a regular, if not daily, part of your courses abroad.
- Walking tours, studio visits, museums, concerts, literary circles in coffee houses, architectural boat tours, etc.
- If required class excursion is after classroom time (i.e. concert), it can probably count as contact hours.
- Day trips and weekend excursions. Consider cost, esp. if required.

## Cultural Learning On-site

### 6. Focus on “Out-of-classroom” learning



Class field trip in Kyoto, Japan.



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 6. Focus on “Out-of-classroom” learning



The history class traces the locations of the Velvet Revolution in Prague.

## Cultural Learning On-site

### 6. Focus on “Out-of-classroom” learning

Student testimonial:

*“For Photography class, we were out in the city every other day. The way that the course was structured we had to. It was a totally different experience intentionally using the city as a classroom than it was just walking around Prague.”*

*“The class excursions was a very proactive way to learn and become engaged with our surroundings. We learned to navigate the city and understood the curriculum through experiencing it.”*



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 7. Hire local staff and student assistants

- Local student assistants can help with local arrangements prior to program.
- Airport pick-up.
- Have a local student assistant stay in dorms with US students to help .
- Helpful with language issues.
- Assist faculty in arranging class excursions, etc.



Czech student Kristyna picking up students at the airport.

## Cultural Learning On-site

### 8. Extra-curricular cultural excursions and activities

- Sports: Volleyball, soccer, Petanque etc. – tournaments with local student groups
- Dance classes, yoga, cooking classes, calligraphy, martial arts, etc.
- Readings, invite locals to listen and participate
- Pizza party, BBQ, Picnics
- Local festivals, markets, etc.
- Dinners, film screenings
- Weekend Field Trips



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 8. Extra-curricular cultural excursions and activities



*Almabtrieb* (return from the pastures) – students join the local festival



## Cultural Learning On-site

### 8. Extra-curricular cultural excursions and activities



Optional weekend field trip to Vienna – dinner and music at a local inn



## Cultural Learning On-site

### Student Testimonial:

*“The opportunities given during the summer program weren't just opportunities to travel, make new friends, or get some class credits. It was about understanding those around me, both my fellow Americans and the locals I had just met. It was about seeing a new culture so that we could see our own in a different light. It was about finding I could push myself way beyond my comfort zone and still hold true to who I am. It was about reaffirming everything I want to do in the world. It was about learning in every respect of the word.”*

## Cultural Learning On-site



Thank you and *Bon  
Appetit!*

Irene Ziegler  
University of New Orleans  
[iziegler@uno.edu](mailto:iziegler@uno.edu)



## Cultural Learning On-site

Other suggestions and practices: