SURFACE CULTURE
Easy to Spot

- These are the most visible elements of a culture.
- Often associated with consumer products and material goods.
- Often fun and exciting to adapt to.
- **Culture of the senses**: it’s what you can see, smell, taste and hear!

Enjoy these first impressions, but reach further.

UNSPOKEN RULES
Visible If You Look Closely

- These rules and norms govern behavior and relationships.
- They are seen as “common sense” by locals.
- Knowing the social rules will help you build trust and form friendships.
- **Social culture**: it’s how you interact, socialize and communicate!

Strive to engage at this level; make it your goal.

DEEPLY-HELD BELIEFS
Challenging to Uncover

- These are underlying values and notions of truth, identity and society.
- This level impacts the worldview of locals in ways even they may not grasp.
- Higher levels of the culture tree “grow” out of these elements.
- **Core culture**: it’s how you understand ethics, power, love, life and the planet.

Start with awareness; build insight over time.
Make the Most of the Culture Tree!

The Culture Tree will help you decode and successfully manage cross-cultural relationships at every stage of your go-abroad journey – from the initial tourist high to your first cross-cultural connections and the deeper challenge of long-term immersion. Still wondering how to use it? Check out these tips:

**Why use the Culture Tree?**

Because it’s the quickest way to grasp the many dimensions of culture! Understanding these concepts will help you navigate culture shock and provide a blueprint for dealing with your experiences abroad.

**When to use the Culture Tree:**

Review this model repeatedly during your studies. Before and during travels abroad, while studying a foreign culture, or when you wish to gain perspective on your home culture. Explore the additional resource linked below to gain a full understanding of the Culture Tree and its implications.

**Make it work for you!**

Approach this model in any way that works for you! Some students will want to dig deep, researching multiple facets of their host culture at each level, while others will be happy to understand the basic concept of the tree. Every stride you make towards building your global outlook is positive.

**Speak to advisors!**

There are multiple staff members at school who can help you achieve your international goals. Speak to study abroad advisors, career advisors and internationally oriented professors about the Culture Tree and your goals.

Want to discover more about the Culture Tree?

Read this companion Quick Guide: *The Culture Tree in Action*.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** *The Culture Tree has been adapted from Zaretta Hammond’s model, as seen in Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain (2015).*

**See the Article Version**

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