

# UNIT 4: CULTURE & CULTURAL DIVERSITY

**PASSPORT TO THE WORLD**

**Resources Guide**

## OUTCOMES:

- Students will recognize the variety of cultural attractions that can be found around the world
- Students will be able to appreciate the importance of the cultures of other countries
- Students will recognize the value of their own culture and the importance of preserving distinctive cultural elements
- Students will recognize that cultures differ in terms of what they see



as important, and that the same thing can mean different things in different cultures

## Introduction:

By its very nature tourism provides opportunities for increased social contact. It can bring people together and foster intercultural understanding. However, mass tourism can have the opposite effect; it can encourage changes in cultural traditions and activities that cause much of their original significance to be lost.

Culture has been defined in many ways. It is the sum of things that make a country unique— and it is often defined in different ways by different age groups within a culture.



GTTP Photo Contest winner: Tiaan DeBeer—South Africa Rainbow Nation

Even the way a business meeting is organized can vary greatly from one culture to another.

Sometimes the culture can be summed up in a few words, but usually defining a country's culture is a complicated process.

Even colors and numbers can have different meanings in different cultures.



## Slogans and Symbols:

Travel & Tourism companies and government officials often try to come up with slogans that sum up their country or city, or which make their destination stand out from others. You can be the judge of their effectiveness. Here are some recent slogans:

- ◇ **Belize.** Mother nature's best kept secret.
- ◇ **Mexico.** Closer Than Ever.
- ◇ **Canada.** Discover our true nature.
- ◇ **India:** You'll never be the same again.
- ◇ **New Zealand:** A different down under.
- ◇ **New York State:** I love New York.
- ◇ **South Africa:** It's impossible.
- ◇ **Malaysia:** Truly Asia.
- ◇ **Hong Kong:** Live it. Love it.
- ◇ **Discover Hungary.**

Visual symbols are often used to stand for the culture. For example, the Eiffel Tower in Paris is a classic symbol of France. It does not define the culture per se, but it says "France" to everyone who visits it.

The Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor is an important national symbol for the USA. Australia's kangaroos and koala bears are recognized around the world, though new

## FAST FACT:

In Japan, Korea and other Asian countries good manners require you to present your business card with both hands, not one hand.

marketing materials often use a photo of the modern Sydney Opera House. In Brazil, the statue of Christ (the Cocovada) on a hill above Rio de Janeiro says "Brazil." St. Petersburg, Russia, has the Hermitage Museum. London has the Tower of London. India has the



## FAST FACT:

In Korea the most important people in a meeting will face each other across the middle of the table. In Kazakhstan the seat of honor is the one furthest away from a door.

**FAST FACT:**

In France when meeting someone for the first time do not ask what they do for a living and other personal questions. It will be interpreted as an intrusive attempt to determine income and status. In the U.S. and Korea such a question is considered a friendly attempt to get to know someone.



Taj Mahal palace; China has the Great Wall; Moscow's Red Square and the Kremlin are powerful symbols of Russia. Tourism officials have recognized that it is important to have some landmarks that visitors can see and that make

them feel they have really been to the particular country. Once the particular landmark has been seen, though, the country's culture needs to

be accessible in a variety of ways to visitors. And neither a slogan nor a photo can convey enough information to make a destination attractive to potential visitors.

**FAST FACT:**

In China, Japan and several other Asian countries, the color white is associated with death and worn at funerals. Black is worn at marriages. In Europe and America and other areas, the color white is a positive color and worn at weddings. In Mexico, yellow is associated with death.

In the West, 13 is an unlucky number. Some tall buildings do not use the number 13 to when numbering floors. The number 4 is unlucky in some parts of Asia, including Japan, while 8 is considered lucky. The number 7 is considered lucky in parts of Central Europe, unlucky in Kenya.

To effectively market a destination requires an information campaign that provides the right kind of information in many different media. Equally important is the kind and cost of access to the destination (via land, sea or air) and the actual experience the traveler has during his or her visit.

Just as visitors can be affected by a foreign culture, so too can visitors affect the cultures they visit.

Survey your neighborhood and see if there are elements in your culture that have been changed by a foreign culture. Are there cultural elements that you think need to be preserved? These can be customs, foods, architecture, music, traditions, beliefs, etc.

### FAST FACT:

The circular “A-OK” symbol made with the thumb and finger in a circle is used in American and other countries as a positive sign. But it is considered obscene in

countries like Brazil and Turkey. The thumb’s-up sign used in some countries to express approval is considered a rude gesture in Australia and Nigeria.

## Communication & Culture:

When people think of communication and travel, they tend to think about language and whether or not the traveler can speak the language of the country he or she is visiting. But communication involves more than knowing the language.

The American Express Company website published some communication tips developed by A.J. Schuler, Psy.D., of Schuler Solutions (<http://www.schulersolutions.com/index.html>) to help

### FAST FACT:

A nod of the head up and down means “no” in Greece and Bulgaria, a shake of the head sidewise means “yes.” In North America, a nod means “yes” and a shake means “no.”

business people communicate more effectively when in foreign countries.

Dr. Schuler noted that different cultures have very different views on what is appropriate during a conversation, including:

- **Who is entitled to speak first and the correct way to start and end conversations.**
- **When to speak or listen.**
- **When to interrupt or not.**
- **When to use humor or not.**
- **How much to say and how long it takes to say it.**
- **Appropriate and inappropriate topics of conversation.**
- **The tone of voice and style of speaking.**

### FAST FACT:

Don’t send a bouquet of purple flowers to someone in Brazil or Mexico.

Depending on the culture, the age, gender and social status of the participants can determine what is appropriate. Even if you unknowingly violate local practices, you can offend people just as much as if you were deliberately rude. And, sometimes when you are trying to be polite, you can offend them.

### FAST FACT:

Never touch the head of a Thai. The head is considered the location of a person’s soul and sacred.

**FAST FACT:**

In Russia discussing personal problems is not a taboo, because sympathy and compassion are regarded as important values.

**FAST FACT:**

UNESCO estimates that Hungary's Fertő/Neusiedler Lake area has been a meeting place for people of different cultures for 8,000 years.

**FAST FACT:**

In Europe tradition calls for avoiding sending a bouquet with an even number of flowers.

The important thing to remember is that cultures are different, and a traveler should not expect people in other cultures to think or act the same way he or she does.

Another critical form of communication is non-verbal – the way people stand, sit or move and the way their bodies communicate can have vastly different meanings across cultures. In some cultures it is polite to stand or sit close to another person; in others, it is polite to leave a space of about a meter between you and the person you are talking to and getting very close is seen to be aggressive.

There are many elements that add up to a country's culture. A few are mentioned below. You can likely identify the things that make your culture unique and special.

**Food:**

Food is one of the most distinctive cultural features. Immigrants to other countries often start restaurants as a way to make a living—and they cook and sell their native dishes. For many people, eating in a restaurant that serves food from another country is

the thing that motivates them to travel to that country. Food and wine tours are very popular in countries like France and Italy; the state of California, in the USA, promotes its wine growing area as a major tourist attraction, and the city of San Francisco, California, prides itself on being a town for food lovers.



## Music:

Just as tourists want to find distinctive food, they want to find unique music and dance. What music, food or dance is distinctive in your area?

Music, historically, varied from one culture to another. Today, you can categorize music by categories –hip hop, rock, blues, country, jazz– that are universal from country to county. You can also find music that is distinctive to one

culture. For many tourists the highlight of their trip is finding distinctive music when they visit another country. Festivals and carnivals are not only enjoyable for the people who live in a country, they are very popular with tourists.



### Do you eat these?

- **BATS** - Bat meat is known to be a prized delicacy within the Batak and Minahasa minority communities of Indonesia.
- **CATS** - Cat meat is eaten in China and Vietnam. In desperate times, people of other areas have been known to resort to cooking and eating cats.
- **DOGS** - Dog meat is used as food in parts of China as a normal, staple item. It is also considered as a delicacy in South Korea.
- **ELEPHANTS** - In Central and West Africa, elephants are hunted for their meat. Some people in Thailand also believe that eating elephant meat improves their sex lives and elephants are sometimes hunted specifically for this.
- **HORSES** - Horse meat is part of the cuisine of countries as widespread as Polynesia, Serbia, Slovenia and Kazakhstan, but is taboo in some religions and many countries

## Architecture:

Architecture is another distinctive element of a culture. Think about the distinctive “onion” shaped domes of old Russian churches. Often architectural elements from one culture are found in many others. As an example, observe whether “Greek columns” that are now found in many countries besides Greece are found in any buildings in



GTPP Photo Contest winner: Chan Tsz Him—1881 Heritage Building Restoration





your area. All over the world columns are considered to suggest that the building – or its owners – are important. What symbolizes “importance” in the architecture in your culture?

Many visitors want to see distinctive buildings or places like town plazas when they are in a foreign country. Historic buildings, typical homes, places of worship, public spaces like city squares and parks all help define a country’s culture. In The Geotourism Study conducted by National Geographic Traveler two thirds of the people surveyed said “their travel experience is better when the destination preserves its natural, historic, and cultural sites and attractions.”

## Conclusion:

Cultural tourism is becoming more popular as more travelers recognize that it is fun to find a place where things and people – and music, art, customs, food, literature, dance, architecture – are different from what they know at home.

Understanding your own culture and helping preserve it is an important contribution to successful Travel & Tourism in your own country, and to your own enjoyment as a resident.

### FAST FACT:

The largest English speaking nation in the world is India.  
Source: <http://india.gov.in/myindia>



GTTP Photo Contest winner: Turi Adrienn—We Believe

### FAST FACT:

Never sit so that the sole of your shoe is pointed at a person in most Arab countries and some Asian ones.

### FAST FACT:

According to the World Tourism Organization the East Asia/Pacific region will overtake the Americas by 2020 as the second most popular destination after Europe and account for 27 percent of all tourist arrivals.