Pre-departure workshop
Reflection

pre-departure
On the cusp of a big adventure … will it be life changing?

Prepared for departure – bags packed & passport in hand

Journey to another land – and come back ‘different,’ ‘transformed,’ ‘changed’…
Taken in Gentry, Arkansas, USA.
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Original at http://www.flickr.com/photos/nanoprobe67/5817419939/in/photostream/
Generally people are motivated to go overseas out of desperation or inspiration. Whatever your motivation, you will need to step outside of your comfort zone and harness your inner resources.
Experience isn't what happens to you; it is what you make of what happens to you.

Aldous Huxley
Everything that happens to you is your teacher. The key is to learn to sit at the feet of your own life and be taught by it.

Polly B. Berends
a four-stage process
transforming your experience into meaningful life events

is the data-generating part of the cycle that sets the foundation for learning.
reflection

What did you see?
Look back and replay in your mind’s eye what happened during the experience?
So what? How did this make you feel, think, sense? Did you have an emotional, visceral or intellectual reaction?
Now what?
Applying what you have learned. ‘If I were in the same situation now, I would...’
Experience + Reflection = Learning

So what?

What?

Now what?

Diagram from Wikimedia Commons: http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Simple_chem_distillation.PNG
experience, reflect, process, apply

Leaving behind...
- safe
- known
- comfortable
- predictable
- familiar

the goldfish as symbol of departure...

in perspective
experience, reflect, process, apply

Stepping outside your comfort zone...
- risky
- unfamiliar
- unexpected
- unknown
- uncomfortable
- unpredictable

the goldfish enters a new environment...
It is important that introspection and reflection be incorporated into the study abroad experience.

**Experience without reflection is like eating without digestion.**

An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that theory has vital and verifiable significance.

*John Dewey*
Merry Racism

I have been in the Netherlands for over three months now, and I haven’t really been shocked by anything. ...

But then I began to notice some odd decorations in the windows of shops. Namely, colourfully dressed black dolls similar to ‘Golliwoggs’. I was quite shocked, because the Netherlands has a reputation for being a free-thinking liberal minded country, and these dolls would be completely unacceptable in Australia.

Apparently, the decorations were for the Dutch Christmas, called Sinterklaas. Sinterklaas is celebrated on December 5th, and involves a Santa type figure arriving on a ship from Spain to give presents to children. However, he is not aided by elves, but by black slaves called the Zwarte Piet.
Merry Racism

So every shop in Utrecht has pictures and dolls of Zwarte Piet. However, the Dutch claim that the tradition is not racist. They argue that Zwarte Piet isn’t an African slave, but is only black because of soot from coming down the chimney. But then how are their clothes perfectly clean?

I couldn’t believe it, so I went shopping and took photos of every example of what I perceived to be blatant racism. But I was absolutely floored when I saw people actually dress up as Zwarte Piet and paint their face black. Seriously, I do not think that you could get away with that in Australia.

Original post at http://ozstudentsabroad.com/2010/12/08/merry-racism/
Response to Nathan by Alex

I must say that I was initially a tad surprised by your reaction to my favourite Zwarte Piet, as he resembled joy to me when I was a child in Holland – he even rode on the back of my father’s motorbike to visit us on Sinterklaas!

Racism was never factored in – not even in my later years there. Zwarte Piet’s mantra was one of respect – that we should respect others. And that just goes to show – cultural experiences and values are quite personal. That said, it does raise our awareness considerably.

For me, it was delightful to view your snaps as I have just returned from Holland after seeing him swinging from the balcony in “De Bijenlorf” in Amsterdam.

Original post at http://ozstudentsabroad.com/2010/12/08/merry-racism/
Merry Racism

Nathan’s response to Alex’s comment

When Nathan processes and analyses this newfound information gleaned from Alex’s response he will adjust his future actions and suspend judgement accordingly - Nathan can now move into the NOW WHAT phase (see next slide).
Merry Racism

Nathan’s response to Alex’s comment

For deep and relevant learning to occur, it is imperative that Nathan processes and analyses his newfound information and adjust his future actions accordingly – i.e. NOW WHAT?

From a Dutch person’s perspective (i.e. Alex’s comment) there was no inkling of racism evident in Zwarte Piet – in fact, only respect. A far cry from Nathan’s initial reaction.
Merry Racism

Nathan’s response to Alex’s comment

Learning: Sometimes we have blinkered responses and only see through the lens of our ‘home’ culture. We jumped to the wrong conclusions – this example shows how...

Nathan also might wonder how some customs or practices at home might be misinterpreted – or just interpreted differently – by visitors or other outsiders.
In other words – your new found knowledge will “shape” how you approach the same experience in the future.


A mind that is stretched by new experiences can never go back to its old dimensions.

Oliver Wendell Holmes
Sometimes travellers get swept along with the need to condensing the most into their time.

E.g. ‘Here I am at the Eiffel Tower, the Coliseum, Venice, Buckingham Palace, Stonehenge, the Acropolis, Reichstag...’

It is important to “Be” part of your host culture.

Mantra – less doing, more being.
Pre-departure workshop

Thank you!
Reflection
pre-departure workshop

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For more information: ozstudentsabroad.com or http://www.tlc.murdoch.edu.au/project/btlh/
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