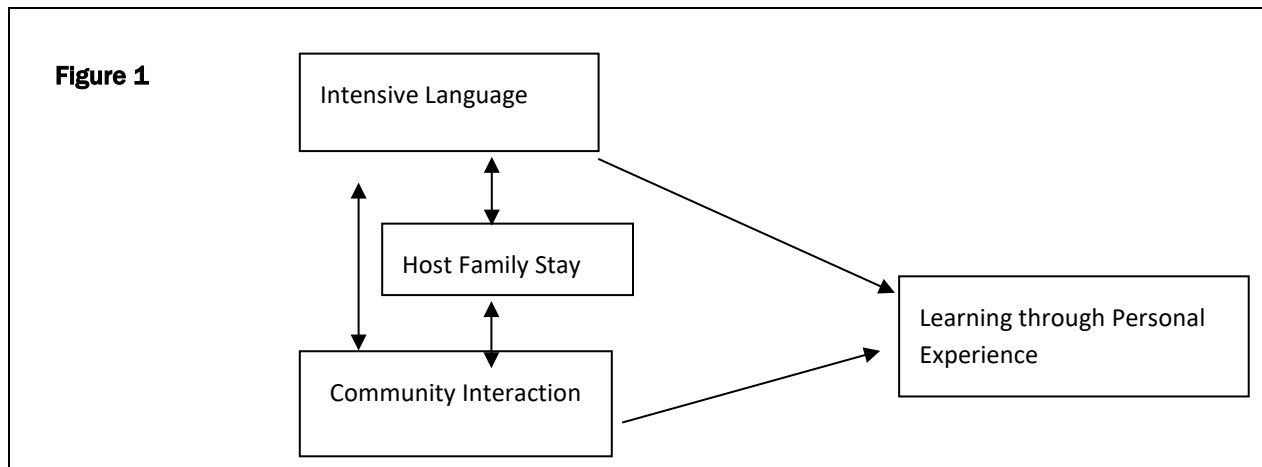


# PITZER PROGRAM MODEL

## AN INTEGRATED LEARNING MODEL

Pitzer's Study Abroad programs ask students to engage the local lifestyle, language, and culture as fully as possible. Our programs provide ample opportunities for cultural immersion and integrated learning. Rather than thinking about the program as separate courses or classes (which is how it shows up on the transcript), we want you to begin to see the program as it really is: a connected whole where each part of the program is related to and dependent on every other part of the program, and where all these components work together to create a particular kind of interconnected intercultural learning experience. Your program may consist of a combination of language learning, family stays, study trips, community interaction, the core class, and independent learning.

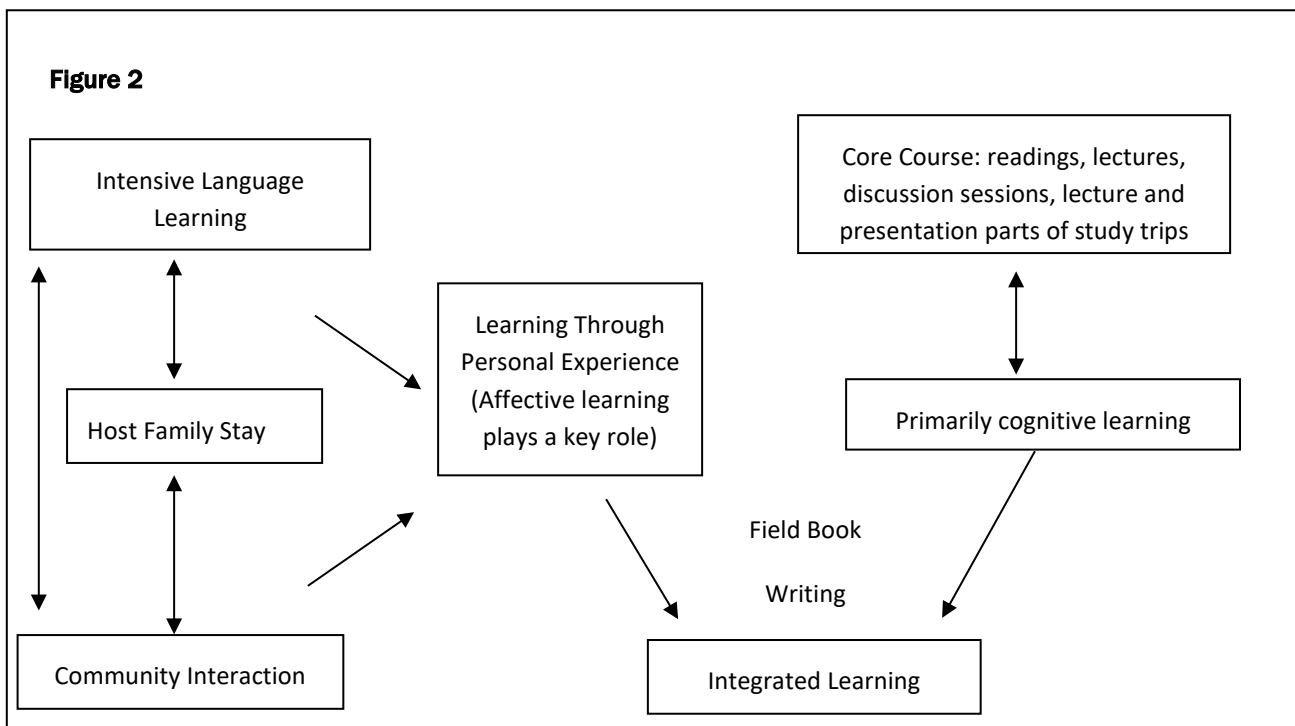
As you can see from Figure 1, intensive language instruction (in the classroom) allows you to participate fully in the life of your host family and make that part of your program into an important mode of learning. At the same time, full participation in the life of your host family allows you to develop a higher proficiency in the language than would be possible in any other living situation. As your language skills develop, your host family helps you to develop meaningful connections in the larger community. In turn, your interactions in the community enhance your language learning even more, while giving you an important context for better understanding your host family. Taken together, this part of your program (family stays, community interaction, out-of-class language learning) can be considered your *learning through personal experience*.



An important part of your learning through personal experience is affective learning, which relies on trust in personal experience and relationships. It acknowledges feelings as valuable tools in the learning process and is often subjective and very attached. Intuition and empathy play key roles in affective learning.

On the other side of the learning continuum is that part of the core course that consists of lectures and readings. This part of your learning is largely cognitive; that is, learning through objective, detached examination, where emotions are discouraged. Cognitive learning relies heavily on memorization, and analysis; it is the type of learning you typically do in a university classroom by taking and memorizing notes, library research, and literature review.

The heart of our educational model is the connection you make between your learning from personal experience in the culture, for which affective knowing plays a very important role, and your learning through core course lectures and readings, which is largely cognitive (Figure 2). In this type of connected learning, your own observations, conversations, and experiences, as well as your feelings and intuitions are given equal importance to more traditional forms of classroom learning such as lectures and readings, and you are encouraged to combine the two in a process of constructing your own meaning. This can be a difficult exercise for students who have been conditioned to thinking that the only valid forms of knowing are contained in books, scholarly articles and the lecture notes, but for those who approach this with an open mind, it can also be a very empowering educational experience. You will be expected to engage in the process of integrated learning throughout the program and demonstrate this type of learning in core course writing assignments and discussion sessions.



---

**Cognitive learning** is reading about infant mortality rates in a particular country, learning some of the main economic and social causes, and hearing a lecture on the efforts of international aid organizations to provide better pre-natal health care.

**Affective learning** is the lump in your throat and the knot in your stomach as you sit quietly and listen, speechless, as your host mother tells you about how three of her five children died from illness between the ages of one and five. Her interpretation of why and how this happened may be quite different from what is said in the books.

**Integrated learning** is combining the two to arrive at your own personal understanding of infant mortality – its causes, effects and possible solutions. It is meaning you construct yourself that comes from an integration of both cognitive knowing and affective knowing. It is often learning that transforms behavior and that creates a passion for action or change. Connected learning gives a human face to statistics and abstract concepts. At the same time, it allows for a fuller and more accurate understanding of personal experience. It is balanced and whole. It is especially meaningful to you as it lies in the intersection of what you know to be true from personal experience and what you have learned in your readings and lectures.

*Experiential education is not just experience! It is experience plus reflection. It is education that requires connected, integrated learning.*

## CULTURAL IMMERSION

The study abroad programs at Pitzer College provide ample opportunities for cultural immersion. They require adaptation. Wherever you go, we hope you will engage the local lifestyle, language and culture as fully as possible, and begin to understand your hosts. Pitzer asks that you make the commitment to take those opportunities and follow that guidance when you participate in a study abroad program. Notice the word *commitment*. Immersion does not happen automatically. It takes a certain commitment over the course of the program— a mindfulness of why you came in the first place and faithfulness to that.

We expect you to move beyond passive observation to actual participation in the life of the host community. We ask you to meet the culture on its own terms and share the common experiences that make up the everyday lives of typical community members. We provide the structure and encouragement for cultural immersion, but you must choose between engaging the culture on its own terms and retreating to more convenient and familiar options.

---

## THE ROLE OF PROGRAM STAFF

Program staff members are committed to help facilitate immersion into the local culture and your integrated learning. In order to do this they will often ask you make the hard choice for cultural immersion and appropriateness over the more familiar, easier option. This is sometimes seen by students as a lack of support, but to the contrary, our staff would be remiss if they did otherwise. When staff insist you do something on your own, in the same way the locals do, rather than doing it for you, they are helping you to develop your own creative problem-solving solutions in the new cultural context. They are, in fact, supporting you in your own culture learning and adjustment, which is their job. Staff members are not there to become your friends, but to facilitate your learning. By the end of the program you will appreciate this when you are capable of operating independently, appropriately and successfully in the new culture.

However, when you are in the midst of the cultural adjustment process it is often difficult to appreciate what the staff is doing in terms of supporting your culture learning. We hope that by emphasizing this here, you will be better able to step back and understand that when your program staff nudges you into participating more fully and appropriately in the local culture, as

uncomfortable as that may be at first, they are supporting you in the best way possible. To the extent that you can recognize this and can express your appreciation to the staff, you will have a better educational experience. This is human nature. This does not mean you cannot express concerns and offer suggestions, but please do these in a way that respects the collective wisdom of the staff and takes into account the educational goals of the program which attracted you in the first place. Seek to understand rather than to judge, both the host culture and your program staff. Give your program staff the gift of your enthusiasm and support and they will give you the gift of the best program and educational experience possible.

## PITZER PROGRAM COMPONENTS

### THE CORE COURSE

The Pitzer core course integrates all components of the program, including lectures, readings, the field book, study trips, and involvement in a local community organization. It offers an important framework for understanding the social, political, economic, and environmental issues within the country and region. The course typically includes lectures by local university faculty, specialists from governmental and non-governmental organizations, and site visits which allow students to explore a variety of topics throughout their program.

---

### SITE VISITS

To deepen students' understanding of topics covered in the core course, they participate in several site visits and major study trips. Site visits and study trips vary depending on the program and the year. Visit the program specific handbook for information about the site visits and study trips typical for your program. The main costs associated with the trips (transportation, main meals, and lodging) are covered by the program. However, souvenirs and activities student choose to arrange outside of what's been planned by the program director are not covered.

---

### THE FIELD BOOK

An important component of the core course on Pitzer programs is the Fieldbook. The Fieldbook recognizes that writing is one of the deepest and most precise measures of experience and an activity that both generates and reflects learning. Highly demanding of your time and intellect, the Fieldbook asks you to integrate the theoretical and experiential components of your program through a series of structured writing assignments. It helps you to clarify and articulate your feelings, thoughts, insights, and beliefs as they evolve over the program and provides a forum for discussion of those ideas with program staff and participants. The Fieldbook format and content will vary slightly in each Pitzer program, so you will receive program-specific guidelines as part of your in-country orientation. Here are answers to frequently asked questions.

What is the difference between the Fieldbook and a personal journal?

The Fieldbook is not a personal journal. It is a series of structured writing assignments that are submitted throughout the semester for a grade. We encourage you to keep a separate journal of your personal experience (that is neither read nor graded by staff) in which you record your day-to-day experiences, conversations, observations, meaningful quotes, thoughts and feelings. You should draw from your personal journal along with notes from readings and lectures to craft Fieldbook assignments.

#### Fieldbook Essays

The Fieldbook often incorporates both analytical and descriptive writing within a single assignment. Many assignments consist of a focus (theme-driven) question that asks you to explore and analyze important local and national issues from a variety of perspectives. Assignments may offer several choices, or ask you to explore a specific topic. In all cases, the assignment asks you

to do this in a way that examines the topic in light of lectures, reading material and your own, relevant interactions with members of the host culture. While dealing with your personal interactions and observations, it is often helpful to approach this descriptively as well as analytically; this involves describing in rich detail certain aspects of your experience and your observations in order to convey them with depth and clarity. While assignments often ask you to address specific topics, they usually offer some latitude on what aspects of your experience and observations you choose to include.

How is the Fieldbook graded?

Pitzer's cultural immersion learning model blends rigorous in-class studies with hands-on experience in the culture to allow you to arrive at a deeper understanding of issues and your own experience. The Fieldbook serves as a keyway for program staff to both facilitate and assess this kind of learning, and thus makes up a significant part of your grade for the core course. While each type of assignment will have slightly different grading criteria, in general, assessment will

be based on certain key criteria that reflect the educational goals of the program:

- Evidence that you have used your language to participate in family life, explore the community, develop relationships and explore issues;
- Evidence that you have thoughtfully reflected on your experience in light of readings, lectures and discussions;
- Evidence that you have made careful observations, described them in rich detail, and distinguished them from interpretations;
- Evidence that you have explored important local and national issues from a variety of perspectives and when appropriate, examined your own assumptions about these issues.

Who will respond to and grade my Fieldbook entries?

Fieldbook entries are assessed and graded by program staff who have been trained to facilitate and evaluate the kind of engaged, connected learning the Fieldbook is designed to measure. Their wide knowledge of the country and culture, their understanding of the educational goals of the program, and their sense of the specific objectives of any assignment allow them to assess your Fieldbook entries in formative ways that continue to promote reflection and heightened awareness of the topic throughout the semester. To this end, you are welcomed and encouraged to rewrite

Fieldbook entries in consultation with the program staff. Rewrites should address comments on the original entry and include additional exploration of the topic with staff, fellow students, faculty and community members as appropriate.

## INTENSIVE LANGUAGE

The language component features small classes with intensive instruction for three to four hours a day, five days a week. During the first two weeks of the program there may be up to five hours of language class a day. You will learn grammar and vocabulary (just as you would in a class at your own college), but you will do this in a way that allows you to practice in the classroom the very features and communicative functions you will need outside the classroom in real life interactions.

Our language learning philosophy is simple: We learn the language not by studying about the language, but by using the language in the classroom, and outside the classroom, with program staff, with host family and community members, and especially with each other.

Students who commit to using the language with each other outside of class whenever possible, even when it would be easier to speak in English, consistently develop significantly higher levels of communicative competence than those who choose to speak only English with each other outside of class.

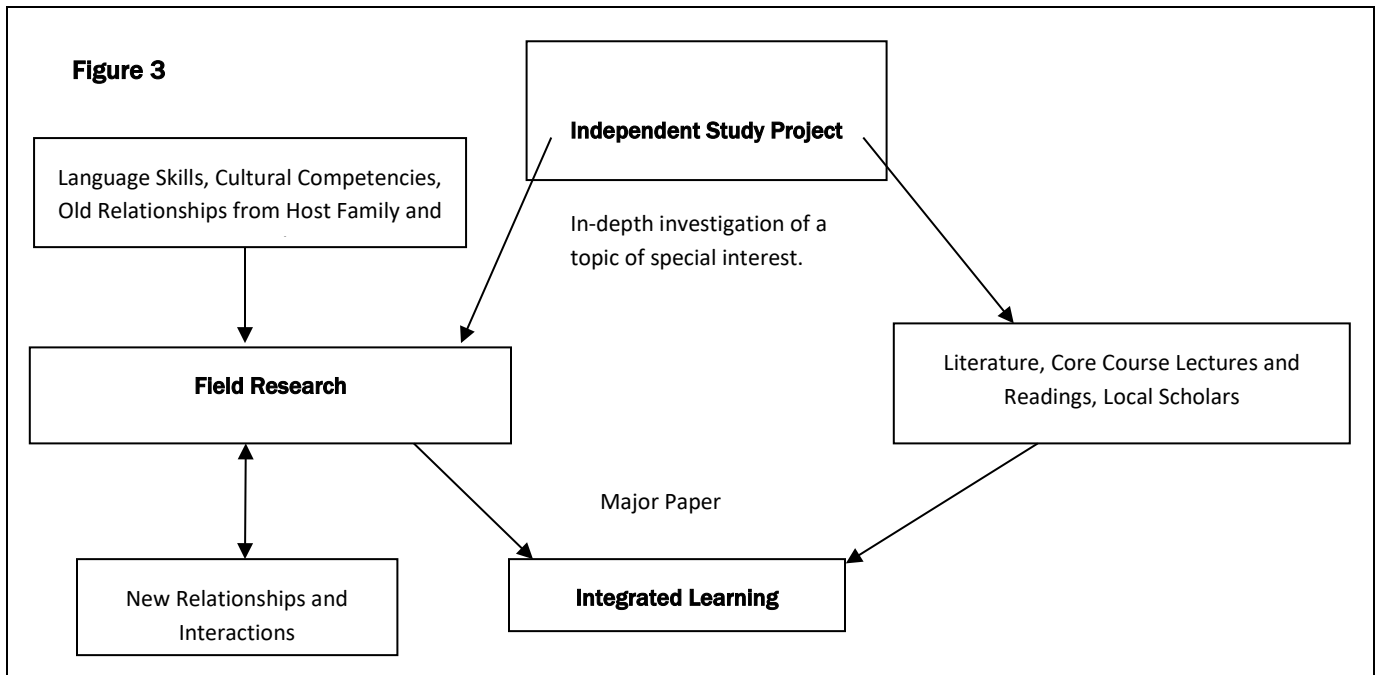
You will be expected to join with program staff and faculty in creating a host culture language speaking environment at the program office, outside the classroom, and during all program activities. Make this commitment, and the results will astonish you, we promise.

## INTEGRATED LEARNING AND YOUR INDEPENDENT STUDY PROJECT

The Independent Study Project (ISP) allows you to take one topic of special interest and explore it in depth. It presents a unique opportunity to utilize and build upon your language skills and cross-cultural competencies as you form new relationships with members of the host culture related to your field of study and systematically explore your topic of interest. If you use the ISP period as an opportunity to enhance cultural immersion learning, you can expect to achieve some important outcomes: your language skills are likely to blossom as you tackle more challenging conversational topics with a wider range of people; your process of cultural adjustment will most likely accelerate as you function more fully and independently in the new culture; and your overall confidence will very likely increase dramatically as you use your language to forge new relationships and negotiate the many challenges of conducting field research in a new culture.

The program will connect you with local experts, who, along with program staff and faculty, will help you craft a solid, feasible proposal, pick a good location, connect with local resources, and develop an appropriate methodology. As you can see in Figure 3, the ISP is another opportunity to engage in integrated learning. Reviewing the literature of your ISP topic, referring back to core course lecture notes and consulting with local scholars (largely cognitive learning) will play an important role in crafting a proposal and deciding on a location and methodology for your study. These sources will also provide important context for your final paper. The bulk of your ISP time however, will consist of field research. Here you will rely on your previous language skills and cultural competencies to interact directly with people from the host culture who are involved in your topic. Learning here will be both affective (personal experience with people) and cognitive (surveys, questionnaires, etc.).

For your final paper, you will be expected to integrate the cognitive and affective learning you experience in your field research with learning from your interactions with local scholars, core course lectures, and the literature of your topic.



## TYPES OF PROJECTS

The ISP may take one of several forms depending on your interests, available resources in the host culture, feasibility of the project, and the credit requirements of your home institution.

### Research Project

Use field research techniques that facilitate cultural immersion and language learning (oral interviews, ethnographies, case histories) to investigate a question or issue of personal interest that brings you a deeper understanding of the host culture.

### Internship

Work within a private, public or educational organization to gain insights into how a particular social issue is being addressed. Use your language to interact with both agency professionals and the clients served by the agency. Analyze the effectiveness of the organization as well as the issue it is addressing.

### Apprenticeship/Internship in the Arts

Work with an artist, dance troupe, theatre group, etc., to both learn a new art form and better understand its role in contemporary culture.

## Requirements

All projects, regardless of form and topic require the following:

1. A focused research question or topic that is viable and feasible given your progress in the language, your experience with field research, the time allotted and the available resources.
2. An appropriate methodology for exploring your topic.

3. A significant period of hands-on fieldwork that requires interaction with members of the host culture who are directly involved in your study topic.
4. A major paper reflecting on the experience.

### Grading

Grading will take into account the process (e.g., proposal, methodology, relationship building, field work, internship performance, presentation of findings to program staff and students) as well as the final paper.

### Local Guidance

ISP proposals will be developed and approved in consultation with program staff, faculty, and local scholars or specialists. The relationships you form with program staff and local experts who help you to develop your proposal and guide your project are crucial and should be considered an important part of the learning process for the course. Depending on the project, its location and the resources available, actual fieldwork may be closely guided by program staff and/or local experts or conducted entirely independently. Guidance for writing your final paper will be provided by your project adviser or program staff as requested and necessary. Program staff must approve ISP topics and locations. Some locations and topics will not be approved because of safety, health or other concerns. All ISP locations need to be approved by the program director. There is no guarantee that all locations will be available. Major factors to be considered in approving any location, will be safety (including country conditions, accommodations and transportation to study site), educational feasibility (topic, learning goals, availability of relevant support and resources) and cost.

### Interaction with Local Experts

Members of the host culture who have studied your topic often serve as important resources in picking a topic, choosing a location, developing a proposal with appropriate methodology, and, for placing your own work in the context of a larger body of work when you write your final paper. However, interviewing experts who have studied your topic, even when they are members of the host culture, should not be your primary means of collecting data and should not take up the bulk of your ISP time. The majority of your fieldwork should consist of hands-on work with people who are directly involved in your topic of interest. For example, the host culture university professor or NGO director, who is an expert on the role of women in village development, may provide you with important guidance for your project, but should not be seen as a substitute for working directly with village women actually involved in development efforts.

### The Use of Interpreters, Questionnaires or Surveys

The use of a bilingual informant to help you translate interviews or conversations you tape may be appropriate but you should design your project and plan your questions in ways that allow you to use and develop your own language skills. Project topics and methodology (questionnaires, surveys, etc.) should be designed to fit your language level whenever possible. Remember, the goal here is for you to learn about your area of interest in ways that allow you to interact directly with people involved in your topic. The relationships you form and the learning and growth you experience while doing this (which will be recorded in your final paper) will very likely become one of the most valuable and rewarding aspects of the program for you.

### Summary

1. Pick a topic you are passionate about and that is feasible.



2. Do something you cannot do at your home institution.
3. Do something that enhances your language and culture learning.
4. Do something that promotes interaction with members of the host culture who are directly involved in your topic of interest.

## HOST FAMILY STAYS

Family stays are much more than just a convenient solution to the room and board problem. They are an important dimension of the academic program designed to give you an opportunity to understand something of what it means to live in the host culture and deal with a range of issues important to the local community and the country. Students almost unanimously report that their stay with a host family was one of the highlights of their program and the center for much of their learning. Family stays allow you to learn much more language than you would in any other living situation. They allow you to put a human face to topics covered in your course lectures and readings. They provide a window into the culture as they include you in their daily lives and welcome you to participate in special ceremonies and events. They support you during your inevitable ups and downs as you adjust to the country and culture and help you to connect with the local community in ways that would otherwise be very difficult if not impossible to achieve.

As you can see, family stays are a key mode of learning employed by the program. In fact, family stays often become the focal point of our commitment to cultural immersion and appropriateness. Living with a family allows you to develop meaningful relationships with family members and neighbors who will vary in age, gender, ethnicity, and educational background. This compels you to give a human face to ideas and theories presented in the core course lectures and readings. Indeed, family stays allow you to feel the pulse of a community, to test and verify the assumptions offered by community agencies and governing bodies, and to explore issues from a variety of perspectives. J. Daniel Hess, author of [The Whole World Guide to Culture Learning](#), has observed that one can learn more by living with a family for six weeks than living in a dorm or alone in an apartment for a year.

While family stays are one of the most effective tools for culture and language learning, they are also, without question, one of the more challenging dimensions of a study abroad program (for both you and the people who host you). You are expected to make a commitment to building a relationship with your host family, to participate as fully as possible in their lives and to respect their habits, lifestyle and values. This is hard work. It usually means making some significant changes in lifestyle and behavior for three to four months and forgoing much of the social life you may be accustomed to on your home campus. Nonetheless, most students who embrace this challenge realize that it results in an experience that would be impossible to have on campus (or even living alone, in an apartment in the community), and find it to be one of the most personally rewarding and academically valuable parts of the program.

---

## EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS

Remember that there is no such thing as a typical family, neither in the US nor in your host country. Your family may consist of a retired couple, a large family with children, a single adult, or several generations living under the same roof. Most host families have been selected because of their interest in sharing their culture with an American student, not because they live in the most convenient location, have the best house, or can provide all the conveniences of your own home. Here are some tips for your home stay:

- Treat your host family as a family, not just as a place to eat and sleep.

- Make a real commitment to building a relationship with your family.
- Respect your family's values, lifestyle and customs, such as meal times, quiet times, use of TV, taste in music, appropriate dress, coming home at a reasonable time, smoking restrictions, appropriate language, conversational topics, etc. (*The question a student should ask here is not, "Will my family accommodate my needs for my lifestyle and my preferences?" Or even, "What is the most I can get away with and still not offend them?" But rather, "What can I do to better fit in with my family members (and their culture) and respect their needs and their lifestyle so that I can have a deeper, more meaningful relationship with them?"*)
- Time with your family will be limited. Commit to sharing as many meals with your family as possible. Notify your family ahead of time if you will not be there for meals.
- Commit to participating as fully as possible in your family's life and their involvement in the community. This may include visits with family to churches or temples, schools, medical facilities, markets, etc.
- Take responsibility as a full member of your family (this might include, depending on what is culturally appropriate, yard work, farming chores, washing dishes, cooking, babysitting, house cleaning, shopping, etc.)
- Occasionally, throughout the semester, engage your family (or certain members or your family) in social and community activities such as movies, theater, eating out, and visits to relatives' houses or areas of cultural interest.
- Observe scrupulously the laws of your host country and community and the values of your family. Do not do anything that would embarrass, endanger, or hurt your family.
- Explore theories and issues raised in the core course with your family and incorporate their perspectives into discussion sessions and writings for the course.
- Be patient. It takes time and energy to make this work, but Pitzer College has been facilitating thousands of these types of family stays throughout the world, and students almost always agree that the rewards of building a meaningful relationship with a host family make the effort worthwhile.
- If you have any concerns about your home stay, talk to your program director early on.

## PROGRAM INTENSITY

Pitzer programs are very intense, and you will find your life very busy and structured for much of the time you are on the program. A large amount of your time is taken up *in the classroom* by the language and core course components of the program. Outside of daily interactions with your host family and the surrounding community there is little chance for independent learning until the Independent Study Project (ISP) component during the last three to four weeks of the program.

This structure and intensity are very important for you to understand and accept if you choose to participate on this program, especially if you are strongly interested in or focused on one aspect of the culture or country, such as religion or rural development, etc. These topics can be pursued in depth only during the ISP, which usually means the final three to four weeks of the program.

You must be comfortable with this model. If you see the core course or language course as hindering your chance to head out on your own to pursue a special topic, you are in the wrong program. If you are excited about learning in community, developing your language skills, going on study trips, and pursuing your special interest as your ISP in the context of a solid

background in the language and culture, and through the eyes of members of the host culture with whom you have formed relationships (e.g., members of your host family) then a Pitzer program is an appropriate choice for you.

Please keep in mind, therefore, that you will not be able to do everything and see everything in the country you might imagine seeing and doing. It is important for you to clarify your reasons for going, make sure they match the program structure and educational goals, and then set priorities and make good choices. Think too, about applying for a fellowship to return after graduation.

---

## VISITORS

**Having visitors during the regular program does not work.** You will be too engaged in program activities (and with homestays on weekends) to attend to a visitor properly without major conflicts arising. **Participation in all program activities and classes is required, and guests cannot be included.** Moreover, we expect you to maximize the time you spend using the language and engaging the host culture. Visitors interfere with this. The idea of playing tour guide during the program to a friend or family member may sound wonderful now, but it inevitably leads to frustration and resentment. Students may explore the country with visitors before the program begins. The best time to have a visitor is after the end of the program when your language and cultural knowledge are at their height, and you can devote full time to hosting.

Pitzer has a firm policy for all its programs regarding visitors. Visitors cannot participate on study trips and on many other program activities. This has grown out of over thirty years of experience. Some of our key reasons for this policy include the following:

- Visitors may not understand, agree with, or want to follow our expectations for cultural appropriate behavior and our commitment to abide by all local and national laws. A visitor who does not share these commitments can easily jeopardize our relationship with the host community and ability to operate the program in a particular area or country. We have no way of encouraging or enforcing this with a visitor who is not on the program for credit.
- We try on all our programs to create an out-of-class language speaking environment in the host culture language. Visitors may not agree with this, or as is usually the case, not have the language ability to join our commitment to this.
- Visitors may not agree with or want to follow our program guidelines for health and safety. This not only puts our students at higher risk (e.g., for gastrointestinal illness caused by eating certain foods with visitors that they would not normally eat), but often undermines the program's credibility in the eyes of the students, especially when the visitor has spent considerable time in the country or region and insists, they know what is best.
- A visitor will often throw off group dynamics. For some students it often takes a month or two before they are willing to open and share with the group, and through that, contribute to our collaborative learning efforts. The breakthrough often happens on a study trip. A new addition to the group will often interfere with this process. Trip leaders may also be uncomfortable with an outsider in the group, and that could affect their interaction with the group.
- When a student has a friend or family member visit, they naturally want to be a good host and/or put in the time and effort necessary to maintain an important personal relationship. This often results in the student pulling away from group activities and other important educational goals of the program.
- Having a visitor is not fair to the trip leader.
  - A visitor who falls into any of the above concerns (and most do) requires extra time, effort and worry on the part of the group leader.

- A visitor or who does not agree with the trip leader's decisions often ends up, sometime inadvertently, undermining the leader's credibility with the group.
- If a trip leader is not comfortable with a visitor participating in certain group activities, they end up in a very awkward and difficult position: they either must ask the visitor not to participate, and risk angering the hosting student, or they allow the visitor to participate even though they have misgivings.
- If a visitor is given permission to join the group and then gets injured or sick (which is not unlikely if the visitor chooses not to follow the program's health or safety guidelines), Pitzer would be responsible.
- Finally, before they are allowed to participate on a program, Pitzer students sign several legally binding agreements, including health forms in which they reveal all medical conditions, a waiver, and a *Conditions of Participation* document concerning respect for staff, other students, the host culture, local and national laws, and the educational goals of the program. Visitors do not sign these documents. This creates liability issues for Pitzer and compromises our ability to 1) minimize or head-off potential health problems and 2) hold all members in the group accountable for conducting themselves in ways that honor the educational goals of the program and our relationship with the host culture.