

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The goal is to create a multicultural experience where various cultural backgrounds of participants are welcomed and embraced with curiosity, openness and acceptance.

CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

There are several cultural dimensions addressing differences in cultures, and here we describe three that may be especially important to consider when leading an intercultural group in a forest:

Time Orientation:

Some participants (coming from monochronic cultures) may enjoy structured plans and punctuality. Others (from polychronic cultures) may find joy in flowing with the rhythm of the group and nature.

Relationship to leadership (power distance):

Some people may look to the guide for clear direction and structure. Others may value a more collaborative, equal relationship.

Communication Style

Some participants (from low-context cultures) may express themselves openly and directly, while others (from high-context cultures) may communicate through gestures, metaphor, or shared silence.

TIPS

- **Prepare with care** — if you know your group's cultural background, think about how to adjust your guiding style if needed
- You can visit free online Country Comparison tool to **compare countries** in six chosen culture dimensions.
- If you're working with participants from polychronic cultures, plan more time for the walk—**flexibility and acceptance** of different perceptions of time can be helpful.
- If your group includes people from high power distance cultures, **be aware** that your role as a forest guide may be seen as highly authoritative – participants may hesitate to disagree with you or openly share their needs (not to 'cause trouble')
- When working with people from high-context cultures, practice **listening beyond words** – pay attention to tone, silence, and body

EXPLORE

Draw 3 lines on a piece of paper:

1. Time orientation:
Flexible _____ **Structured**
2. Power distance:
Equal _____ **Hierarchical**
3. Communication style:
Indirect _____ **Direct**

Mark **x** on each line based on your preferences and style.

Mark another **x** on each line where you think participants of your walk might fall.

Compare the marks to notice potential cultural differences.

REFLECT

- What seeds of wisdom have you received from meeting cultural diversity?

