Best-Practice Guidelines for Photography and Videography from Trips Abroad
when the images may be published in university communication materials

Overall Guidelines

- When selecting content, consider dignity of people, details of culture, beauty of place.
- Focus on one main subject—a person or small group; a thing (examples: a small item, mountain, building).
- Move in close to the main subject (person or thing); crop out distracting details.
- Think about each image as a piece of a story. Show the people and communities with whom you engaged. Also ask someone to take images of you in that community. (What part of the story is this image telling? Why does this image have meaning for you?)
- Try to show the context of the story, too (example: show the person in his/her day-to-day environment, or show the person engaged in an activity).

Photographs

- Set your camera to make the highest-resolution images possible. (The more memory needed to store the image, the higher its resolution.)
- Consider the light. (Is it helping to show your main subject clearly? Should you move left or right, or to the opposite side of the subject?)
- Pay attention to the beauty of colors (or a full range of light-to-dark black-and-white).
- Take more than one single shot of what you want to capture visually.
- Be sure the focus of the lens is on the main subject (not the foreground or background).
- Consider vantage points that are not “straight ahead.” (Perhaps crouch down with your camera, or move to a higher spot and look down to make the photo.)
- Take both vertical and horizontal formats.
- Write down caption information: names, places.
- If you plan to use the images for other than personal sharing (a photo contest, or allowing their use in a Cornell website or brochure), get a signed photo release from each recognizable person in your photograph. (If the person is a child, ask the parent/guardian to sign the release for him/her.)

Video

If your equipment takes HD video, consider experimenting. Think of it as a photograph with motion.

A short videoclip, without any audio—10 seconds or less, like Vine videos—gives others a glimpse into your experience and can convey a strong visual sense of people, culture, place.

- Capture the subject in motion if possible (walking, dancing, working, gesturing, or perhaps showing emotion on his/her face: smiling, laughing, intensely focused…)
- If the subject is stationery (building, mountain, etc.) consider moving the camera to scan across the subject.

If you are bold, or have a journalistic tendency, try adding audio to your video captures.

- Try the “one question, five (or more) people” approach: Think about a single question you could ask the people you wish to show (perhaps community members with whom you studied or worked)—examples: “What would you like me to remember most about you/your community?” or “What have you learned from me about my culture that you are happy to know?”, etc.
- Videotape one person at a time; pose the question, and film their response. You’ll have a nice collective memory to bring home. (And maybe one you’ll want to share with others at Cornell.)