

Seeing Tour

Taking a seeing tour can be a great way to energize and inspire your team before your work kicks into high gear, when you're feeling stuck, or when you're seeking fresh insights. This guide gives you advice on how to plan one and how to make the most of it.

 **TIME: 1-2 HOURS**

When should I use it?

When your team is looking for inspiration or needs to get immersed in a new area you don't know a lot about.

What will I need?

- + Notebook and pen or digital recorder
- + Small camera

- 1 Brainstorm with team members or others about places to go. Look for places easy to get to on foot or via public transportation.
- 2 Break the team into pairs, each with specific assignments about what to look for or observe.
- 3 Write notes, draw sketches, and take photographs in the moment wherever possible.
- 4 Regroup and debrief what people saw, learned, and observed.

What exactly is a seeing tour?

It's a team outing (usually somewhere between 1 and 2 hours long), where the whole team gets immersed in someone else's world—to learn about an unfamiliar topic, see the world from a new perspective, or get creatively inspired by a different approach. The team observes, takes notes, and looks for insights to bring into your project. For example, let's say you're designing a new game app, you might go on a trip to a local game store or video arcade to observe how people play and interact with one another—and to find inspiration from the physical world to bring into your digital app.

What's the goal of a seeing trip?

The main goal is to gather information and inspiration you can use to uncover larger insights about people, spaces, and experiences. You do this by either observing something entirely new or taking a fresh lens to something you already know.

Where should we go?

The answer really depends on the specifics of your project, but here are some starting suggestions:

- If your project involves a retail environment, go visit other spaces that create similar experiences but perhaps in a totally different sector. For example, if you're designing a coffee shop where you want people to hang out all day, go check out the main library.
- If your project involves a new product or service, go observe places where people are using the products or services in the market today. For example, let's say you're designing an online banking website, go spend some time in a physical bank.
- If your project involves developing a program for an underserved population, go spend some time with your target audience in their home environment or social settings, observing their routines and behaviors.

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What should we do when we get there?

Your job is to gather bits of information and inspiration. To do that, you need to be part fly-on-the-wall, part journalist.

Look for clues by paying attention to:

- + First impressions, and what creates them
- + Anything that makes you feel an emotion (e.g., energized, relaxed, intrigued, annoyed, etc.)
- + The details that make an ordinary experience more special
- + The stories an environment tells about itself through words, pictures, and objects
- + The way in which procedures and rules are explained (or not)
- + Processes that get repeated, and how the system works (or breaks down)
- + The way people interact with one another or how one person serves another
- + Things people say that reveal their mindset or attitude
- + Evidence of people's values, desires, or needs

What do we need to bring with us?

Mostly, a keen eye and an open mind. But it also helps to have a small notebook or digital device on which to record thoughts, and an inconspicuous camera.

What should we do when we get back?

Compare notes right away. See what patterns everyone observed and which things only one or two people observed. Make a board that captures your clues, along with any sketches, photos, or other artifacts from the field trip. Identify the key insights that feel relevant to your project.

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Here's a checklist for your trip:

- Pick a venue (or more than one if you have more time or a larger group you want to split up).
- Block out the timing and what transportation you'll need (include travel time in your estimates!).
- Break the team into pairs or trios. You may want to give each pair or trio a specific set of things to observe (e.g., one group focuses on the environment while another looks at interactions).
- Make sure people have notebooks and cameras.
- Make a plan for where/when the team will regroup.
- Debrief as quickly as possible after the seeing tour (don't wait a few days, or the insights will fade).
- Capture your most important clues and observations on a physical or digital mood board to keep in your team's space.