

Want a better holiday? DO YOUR BIT (NOW U R HERE)

It's easy to go on holiday and just find a "home away from home" but if you "burst the tourist bubble", venture out and meet local people you're sure to have a different experience and learn more. What's more the local community will benefit and you'll really enjoy yourself. To make the most of your holiday try following some of the tips below on how to maximise the positive impact of meeting local people and really getting away from it all.

STAY a bit

- ✓ **Go local** – staying at small locally owned/run accommodation will help you get closer to the host culture and may provide a welcome change from the usual big, impersonal hotels
- ✓ **Mind your manners!** - be respectful and polite to hotel staff and thank them for their services. Find out the norm for tipping and avoid awkward moments

DO a bit

- ✓ **Employ local guides** – where possible use official guides or someone local who has been recommended to you and enjoy more authentic experiences
- ✓ **Watch your step** – make sure you don't go where you are not wanted, wait to be invited by locals or be taken by your guide
- ✓ **Snap happy** – think what it might be like if you were at the other end of the lens. Always ask permission before taking a photo
- ✓ **Size matters** – try to go on locally run excursions and stick to small groups as you'll get a more personal service and won't get lost in the crowd
- ✓ **Be a culture vulture!** – make the effort to ask about performers and performances and get a greater appreciation of what you're seeing
- ✓ **It's good to talk** – making friendly conversation with local people can often be more informative than using a guidebook or just talking to travellers

SHOP a bit

- ✓ **Happy shopper** – make sure bargaining is the norm and shop around for prices to ensure you pay what is fair for you and the seller. Accept that you as a "wealthy" foreigner may be charged a little more than a local
- ✓ **Ask why before you buy** – find out about a seller's product or craft, making conversation can reveal interesting stories and make your souvenir mean more. It can also warn you against buying something endangered.
- ✓ **Bon appetite!** – choose locally owned shops and restaurants over chains and discover local life, produce and cuisine

MOVE a bit

- ✓ **Ticket to ride** – using local transport is a good way of meeting local people and seeing sites that would not be in your guidebook
- ✓ **Taxi!** – local taxi drivers are often the best guides and can recommend good places to shop, eat and visit
- ✓ **Under your own steam** – walk and cycle more often; you are more likely to have greater interaction with local people and you may even shed a few pounds!

COVER your bits

- ✓ **Cheers!** – drinking alcohol isn't everyone's cup of tea; save drunkenness for places where it's accepted
- ✓ **Dress to impress** – respect local religious and cultural practices, follow local advice on how to dress and behave appropriately
- ✓ **If you've got it, don't flaunt it** – don't be too showy, leaving expensive things at home will help you blend in better and you don't need to worry about them getting lost or stolen

THINK a bit

- ✓ **Keep your cool** – if you feel you are being hassled by people trying to sell you something remember that they are just trying to make a living and politely ask them to leave you alone
- ✓ **Don't put your foot in it** – to feel welcome be aware that your opinion may be different from others, try not to assert yours too forcefully as it may cause offence
- ✓ **Learn the lingo** – learn a few words and phrases in the local language and don't expect everyone to speak in English
- ✓ **Fact or fiction?** – don't just rely on your guidebook, be prepared to trust local knowledge, guide books can get out of date and sometimes get it wrong
- ✓ **Respect** – treat local people as you would expect to be treated

GIVE a bit

- ✓ **Give wisely** – we all want to help, but sometimes the way that we give can encourage inequality, perpetuate a begging culture, and strip self-esteem. To make a positive difference, give to a local project rather than to individuals. Ask your hotel or guide for advice