

13 Practices of the Morally Conscious Traveler

So you've decided to explore the world. Or at least a tiny part of it, for now...

Here are a few practices that I like to remind myself of before I travel anywhere:

1. Research customs and traditions before you go. This will enable you to be as prepared as you can be. Find out about the acceptable ways of dress, and the customary greetings and manners.
2. Be respectful and open-minded. You will likely encounter situations and sights that you are not used to. Embrace the difference and respect the culture. Remember, you are a visitor.
3. Ask more, tell less. Encourage yourself to bring up questions. Listen intently. The less you talk about you and your country of origin, the more you will learn about your current destination and the people who live there.
4. Respect people's boundaries. No one is obligated to answer or help you. Try to see things from a perspective that is not your own.
5. Be kind, always. Even if you experience unpleasantness. It is not your place to react with anger. Wherever you go, there will be people who appreciate your kindness and authenticity. Express your interest and good intentions. Spread love!
6. Buy locally, as often as possible. You may run into a global restaurant chain or recognize some imported merchandise. Instead of spending money on what you know, support the local businesses that are trying to thrive on a smaller scale.
7. Learn how to say 'please', 'thank you', and 'hello' in the native language. Even if you can't get the accent quite right, people will appreciate your attempt. Don't complain if a language barrier inconveniences you. Embrace the challenge and do the best you can.
8. Take care of the environment. Minimize your impact. Dispose of your waste properly. Conserve resources. Even if you notice people doing otherwise, lead by example. The planet is the one thing we all share, and we should do our best to protect it no matter where we are in the world.
9. Understand that you are not always right or correct. Your opinions are based on your own life experiences. If you ever feel a desire to help out in some way, don't immediately tell anyone what you think is needed. Ask people, listen, and offer your service.
10. Don't assume that you know what is best for the local communities. (You don't.)
11. Assume you know nothing about where you are going. Ignore stereotypes and reputation. Free your mind of the opinions of family, friends, coworkers, and online influencers — leave room for you to form your own thoughts and reactions while you are traveling. Let go of any preconceived expectations, and experience it for yourself.

- 12.** Be present. Try not to think about what you will do once you return to your home country, or which photographs you are going to share. Practice mindfulness. Just be. Learn. Experience. Enjoy.
- 13.** Find gratitude. How wonderful it is to be able to travel somewhere new!