

Tips for Thoughtful Travel: In the Middle of Your Trip

1. **Get lost on many levels.** Take the card from your hotel in the local language as a back-up and be mindful of safety issues, but intentionally put the map away and just wing it. You'll see surprising things and build your confidence. On a more psychological level, lose yourself to yourself. Most of us travel to "find ourselves." However, we normally only find ourselves when we get out of our own heads.
2. **Know what enough means for you.** Some days, you can pack more than you thought possible into a single 24 hour period. Other days, you may yearn to linger in a single place for the whole day. Both approaches have their place. Learning contentment and what "enough" means will make each day more special.
3. **Extend grace.** About a week or so into your trip, the novelty can wear off. When you start to feel out of sorts or short, extend grace both to others (who may be feeling the same) and to yourself. You'll soon catch your second wind.
4. **Learn, Serve, Share.** This maxim of World Servants (an experiential learning agency) is a helpful reminder for any trip. First you learn, then you serve and when you've earned the right, you share your knowledge and stories. Too often we turn this around and think we bring the needed answers to others. But if you go primarily to learn, you'll get so much more from the trip...and so will they.
5. **Take a vacation.** Yes, you're on a trip, but take time to rest, relax and even reflect mid-stream through that trip. A small break will recharge your batteries and give you better perspective.
6. **Be content with silence.** We fill in silent moments with words here more than in many cultures. Shared experience, particularly toward a shared goal as on a volunteer vacation trip, can be more powerful than many superficial words. In countries where you don't know the language, savor both the frustration and also the wonderful liberation of not having to talk all the time.
7. **Practice gratitude.** This is easy when novelty abounds early on a trip but harder when things may not go exactly as planned. Use your trip as an experiment in being thankful in *all* things. When you consciously appreciate everything that is happening, you notice more and it transforms how you approach both the good and the bad of travel.