

How to Travel Like a Local on Your Family Vacation

One of the best parts of travel is discovering and experiencing unique, vibrant places and cultures around the world. Traveling like a local is a great way to get the most out of each destination you visit.

What is Traveling Like a Local? It's seeing a destination as a local does.

It is going beyond the tourist spots and off the beaten path to discover the less visited local areas.

When you travel like a local, you get to explore the real culture, absorb local customs, meet local people, and interact with the culture. You experience the authentic food and cuisine of the area and try new things.



There are several ways your family can prepare to travel like a local. First, consider what you can do as part of your planning. Then look at ways to travel like a local when you're at your vacation destination.

WAYS TO PREPARE

As you're planning your vacation, here are some great ways to prepare. Be sure to involve the whole family.

Research the Destination

When researching your destination, you'll want to discover the spots where the locals go and the activities they do.

More and more tour guidebooks are including a section on off-the-beaten-path destinations or things locals like to do. Search your local bookstore or Amazon for books titled "guide to culture" and the country you are visiting. You can also look for tour books, websites, and blogs written by locals.

Travel shows like Rick Steves, Samantha Brown's Places to Love, and Darley Newman's Travels with Darley are great resources to discover local sites, people, restaurants, and more.

Learn the Language

Learning a few words and phrases of the local language before you visit a destination is a simple and respectful way to connect with locals and make friends while traveling. You will be surprised how much friendlier your interactions will be when you try to buy or order food using the local language.

You can keep it simple by using a language and phrase book to learn a few words as a family or by getting fun flashcards for the kids. You could also sign up for a language class to go deeper.

Learn about Customs and Traditions

While researching, look for details on local culture, customs, and traditions. You want to ensure you and your family dress and act appropriately and respectfully and don't do anything that would be considered rude in the area.

The book series “Xenophobe’s Guide To…” offers helpful and fun insights into different cultures.

It can also be fun to visit destinations when they are having one of their traditional celebrations, like Mexico’s Cinco de Mayo.

Explore the Local Cuisine

Before your trip, introduce the family to the local cuisine they will experience. You can research the best local dishes and make them at home as a family or visit a restaurant in your city that serves the cuisine. Also, in your research, check out online guides to find the best local places to eat.

AT YOUR DESTINATION

Now it’s time to put everything you’ve researched and learned into action.

Be Respectful

Most importantly, you want to ensure you respect the people, places, and culture when traveling. When encountering unfamiliar customs, embrace your position as an outsider and take the opportunity to soak in a new perspective.

We have much pride as Americans and often feel that the way we do things is the right and best way. But this can often shut us off from other and different ideas.

Talk to the Locals

When you’re at your destination, talk to the locals like your hotel concierge, a café barista, waiter, or tour guide. Ask them for recommendations on where the locals eat, the best local dishes to try, the places they go, and more about the area.

Hire a Local Guide

Hiring a local guide from a local tour company is a great way to see your destination like a local. Research the top local tour company is and their city-specific tours. Some of the local guide companies also specialize in engaging tours for kids, which can be great for the whole family when visiting big museums like the Louvre in Paris or sites like the Colosseum in Rome. They can also be a wealth of knowledge about everything from culture to other things to do.

Shop & Eat Local

Make sure you eat at local restaurants and shop from local craftspeople that make the products. This gives your family authentic experiences and supports the local economy.

Another great way to travel like a local is to book your vacation with tour companies like Trafalgar, who specialize in getting you close to the culture and experiences you wouldn’t otherwise have access to when planning and booking on your own.

Traveling like a local can add even more incredible memories to your family vacations.

Local Adventure Awaits!