

HOW TO BE A GOOD TRAVELLER

Read the text and then match the questions below with the sections A-E. The sections may be chosen more than once.

In which section does the writer?

- | | |
|--|------------|
| Criticize the behavior of some travelers? | (1) _____ |
| Admit to being too stubborn in one situation? | (2) _____ |
| Remember the kindness of a particular local official? | (3) _____ |
| Express a dislike for a certain piece of equipment? | (4) _____ |
| Suggest remaining calm in the face of provocation? | (5) _____ |
| Recall being given advice about a personal matter? | (6) _____ |
| Suggest a better alternative to a financial transaction? | (7) _____ |
| Advise against having a tight schedule when travelling? | (8) _____ |
| Encourage us to find out about the needs of local people? | (9) _____ |
| Recall choosing to travel in a relatively uncomfortable way? | (10) _____ |
| Remember sharing a common interest with a group of strangers? | (11) _____ |
| Mention being given a reward for being a source of amusement? | (12) _____ |
| Suggest that some activities require the consent of local people? | (13) _____ |
| Admit to finding some difficult situations amusing to look back on? | (14) _____ |
| Acknowledge that some people may find it hard to acquire a useful skill? | (15) _____ |



You should aim to make friends on your international travels and avoid upsetting anyone

A If you want to break the ice in almost any social situation abroad, remember you're a guest in someone else's country, so you should make some effort to speak the language. Obviously you can't expect to be fluent, even just getting by can be difficult if you haven't got the time or aptitude, but any attempt, however embarrassing, makes an enormous difference. The first time I set foot in China, I only knew three words of Mandarin, which I'd never heard pronounced properly. In any event, my first attempts at conversation proved so entertaining to my hosts that I was promptly presented with a gift. So it's worth trying to meet local people and getting into conversation. Even if you end up speaking mostly in a shared second language, you can learn a lot about one another. I once traveled third class on a train from Harare to Bulawayo, partly because I thought it would make the overnight journey more interesting. Since there were no spare seats, I ended up crammed between carriages. But it wasn't long before the guard took pity on me, inviting me back to his cabin where he plied me with both stories and refreshments until I couldn't take any more of either.

B The key to stress-free travel is never to give yourself a deadline to meet. As soon as you do, things inevitably start to unravel, and there's often very little you can do about it, so you have to make the most of things. I often find that the highlights I tell the most entertaining anecdotes about are times when things didn't quite go according to plan. For example, on what should have been a twelve-hour, cross country drive to the airport in Mongolia, our jeep got stuck in a bog. Forced to camp overnight, we awoke to find a small party of local nomads on horseback, complete strangers, organizing our recovery. We were eventually delayed by twenty-four hours, but it turned out to be the most memorable day of the entire trip.

C In many countries, haggling is part of everyday life, but unless you're after something quite pricey, it's not worth taking to extremes. I once spent a fraught morning in a Nairobi market haggling over the price of a rug until I was blue in the face, but the seller wouldn't budge below his final price. It was only later that I realized I'd been giving this guy a hard time for the sake of one euro. The bottom line is, stop haggling when you stop enjoying it. Of course, even if you're as nice as pie, there are always going to be people who try to take advantage or abuse their

position, and that's true of any country. If you do feel an official is being unreasonable, be polite and stand your ground. The worst thing you can do is lose your temper; the chances are that's exactly what your antagonist is after, and it'll just make them all the more determined to be difficult.

D Travelling should always be a two-way experience. The more your hosts can learn about you and your country, the more you'll both get out of it. Ideal in this regard are postcards from home; pictures of the capital will always go down well as the scenes may already be familiar to your hosts, but pictures of where you actually live and snaps of friend and family are ideal for breaking the ice. It's amazing how many times I've been told which of my friends I should marry, for example! Gifts are also a good idea, but in addition to, not as a substitute for, getting to know people.

If you do some research before hand, you can take something that might also be useful or of interest to those you meet. In many countries, few things will ingratiate you more with your hosts, for example, than things connected with the "beautiful game". I was on a kayaking trip in a remote region when I first experienced this phenomenon. We were on the riverbank, surrounded by a group of excited young children, but having not a word of their language, all I could do was smile. Then one kid gave us the thumbs up sign and said "Manchester United" in heavily-accented English. A lively exchange of players' names ensued, much to everyone's amusement.

E But you'll want to take home some mementos too, and this usually involves photography. I'm not a fan of sneaking shots of people with long telephoto lenses unless they're just a small part of a bigger image. Many people are camera-shy and, in some cultures, suspicious of photography, thanks largely to insensitive foreigners thrusting cameras in the direction of reluctant subjects particularly children. So if you're into portraits, make the effort to talk to your subject first. To my mind, a portrait without a name or a story has no more value than a landscape without a location. But, at the very least, get permission first. If you ask someone to do something for a photo, then it seems reasonable to recompense them for their time, but this is no substitute for giving people some of your own time.