

## EXERCISE 5.1

### PERFORMING TOURISM WORKSHOP

Q: When I travel abroad, I often have a feeling that local people are staring and pointing at the obvious tourist to such an extent that I feel uncomfortable. I feel that I am more likely to be tricked, ripped off or even robbed if I stick out like a sore thumb. How might I blend in or go native? Susan, Edinburgh  
(Email to an Independent Travel Advisor)

What advice would you give to this concerned traveller? Make some suggestions as to what they can do to:

- (a) Avoid looking like a tourist
- (b) Avoid being taken advantage of financially
- (c) Blend in with the local population

Now, dig a little deeper and explain these three concerns in terms of the theories and examples offered in this chapter. What is the significance of these concerns, and how can they be explained, in relation to:

- (1) Cultural capital
- (2) Self-identifying as a traveller rather than a tourist
- (3) Attempting to 'go native'
- (4) Any other applicable example or theory

How would your advice differ according to the cultural background of the individual and their destination? Draft an answer to this query for one of the following scenarios:

- (a) An American woman visiting India
- (b) A Chinese man visiting Egypt
- (c) A Mexican couple in Rome
- (d) A European in China

The Independent Travel Advisor's response to this query was:

A The desire to blend in and experience an authentic encounter with another culture is laudable and a great starting point for a fabulous

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trip. Going native means that not only are you less of a target for the unscrupulous but also that you elevate yourself from the level of the tourist to that of the traveller. Most local people in most places will prefer visitors who have made an effort to understand their lifestyles and traditions and will likely be more welcoming as a result. Who knows, you may even get the chance to see places and activities usually only seen by insiders. The first thing to address is your clothing – you need to avoid giving offence as well as simply dressing as you might at home. Try not to go too far, however, as you really will stand out if you don a sari in India or a Russian style hat in Moscow. Don't wear shorts or revealing clothes to dinner, or to tour sacred sites, or at all after dark if you can avoid it.

You should go local at every opportunity and, in particular, when dining out. Try to avoid limited and expensive tourist menus and learn enough of the local language to be able to navigate a menu without asking for an English translation. Dare to eat different foods or even favourite foods prepared in new ways. A true foodie will be able to find themselves with a full-up belly and a smile on their face anywhere in the world. Remember that many cultures consider it rude to eat while walking the streets, but also that many others positively encourage the consumption of street food. Understand the local custom and then get stuck in! Beyond the need to understand menus, you should also try to use a few local words. Don't be afraid of making mistakes or sounding silly – local people will very much appreciate your efforts and will usually respond with great enthusiasm. If you dress appropriately, use a little local language and get involved in local life you are sure to have a more authentic and enjoyable experience.

Again, thinking about some of the information in this chapter and the rest of the book, answer the following questions:

- (1) What kind of traveller or tourist is the author of this advisory response?
- (2) What kinds of travellers or tourists would the advice suit?
- (3) Why would anybody wish to look like anything other than a tourist when on vacation?