

HOW TO BE A GREAT EXPLORER

HOW TO BE A GOOD FELLOW-TRAVELLER: HERE'S WHAT WE EXPECT FROM ALL GROUP MEMBERS

Hello! Congratulations, you're now a Magnificent Explorer.

You're here to travel to some rather special destinations, while ticking life-changing experiences off your bucket list. And it doesn't get much more exciting than that! Small-group travel is great – you're going to meet others as intent on enjoying the trip just as much as you are, and there's a comforting element of safety for solo travellers.

In our experience, we see the habits and behaviours outlined here occurring naturally within our groups, however, we also feel that a reminder doesn't hurt!

Going on a group trip isn't like going to a restaurant, where you sit back and enjoy the service. Each person's adventure also depends on their fellow group members. Being a shared trip, it means you've all had to pitch in for the services of your driver and trip leader. Each person has paid the same amount, and if we work as a team, everyone can have an amazing time.

Here's how you can do your bit to help ensure a great time for all on your trip:

1. Respect cultural customs. Your trip leader knows all the requirements – if they ask you to cover your shoulders and knees, or remove your shoes, please do so. Please pay attention to the cultural tips in the document.

2. Be the 'positive person' ! Over the next couple of weeks, with so many things happening, something is bound to go off track somewhere. Transport may be late, air conditioning may not work, music may suddenly start blaring outside the hotel at 1am, someone may comment about your religious beliefs or make unsavoury remarks about a politician that you happen to respect... whatever it may be. As much as we work to keep these issues at bay, they can and do occur. Sometimes, these things happen when we're feeling tired or grumpy. It stands to reason that when you're feeling tired, it's likely that others are too. This is the perfect moment to let your gracious nature shine through. In group travel, humour is always your secret weapon. Let's keep it light and respectful. If you are having an issue, please be discreet and bring it directly to your guide or hotel staff.

3. Bring a readiness to adventure. You're travelling to an exotic destination. Rather than put up an emotional barrier, lean into the trip! Put aside the comparisons to Australia/NZ and embrace it all. Learn a few words in the local language, try some new foods, wear different clothes, volunteer for new experiences, help the trip leader where you can. Immerse yourself into local culture! Nothing will amp up your enjoyment more than this!

4. Do your research. When travelling in a group, you're free from major decisions and concerns. Simply let us take the wheel and enjoy the ride. However, this doesn't mean you'll avoid all physical efforts on the trip. If you know what you're signing up for, you won't be caught by surprise later on. So, it's a great idea to study your itinerary and even do your own research on it. Be aware of drive times and how much walking is required on each day.

5. Look out for your fellow traveller. Over the couple of weeks, someone is bound to experience culture shock, a dodgy belly, or perhaps some bad news from home. It happens! If you see someone feeling unwell or uncomfortable in some way, why not check on them gently, in private, if they're ok? If someone is in a bad mood and this is affecting the group, keep in mind that there's probably an underlying reason. If no one else has noticed, it may pay to check in with them when you have a private moment. Keeping everyone safe and happy is a group effort.

6. Look out for yourself. Pay attention to your health. Listen to your body. Don't push yourself if there's no need. Stay hydrated! Don't be afraid to let your tour leader know if you're tired or if the pace is too quick for you.

7. Don't be the cause of delay. Even though when travelling things may go unexpectedly, we ask you to respect everyone's time and be as punctual as possible. Don't let the trip leader and the whole group wait for you. Being on time helps any group trip run smoothly.

8. Be polite, respectful and grateful for your trip leader and driver! Your trip leader and driver are your local insiders that will look after you and introduce you to their country's culture. They are friendly faces that will welcome you and escort you safely to get you on your way home after the trip ends. Don't hesitate to ask them for help with anything. We also ask that you follow any advice and instructions they offer. Please be respectful and thankful as they will be working hard to make it all happen! They're there to take care of you so you can enjoy a magical trip.

9. Be flexible. You should be prepared for slight changes to the itinerary in regards to daily activities. Our trip leaders are encouraged to make adjustments to the trip depending on: local conditions (bad weather, mudslides and so on), group requests or interests, and of course new opportunities presenting themselves (festivals, weddings, unexpected good weather and so on). The trip leader will always communicate this clearly and the group's input will always be sought – and from there, the trip leader will make the final call.

10. Remember, group travel is sharing. We want to make sure everyone has an opportunity to see attractions from the front row. So, we ask that you rotate spots on the vehicle. Don't hog the best spots! Your trip leader will advise on the seat rotations and we ask you to respect them. Remember, a group trip is team work and we ask you to be a team player. Thank you for that!

11. Skipping a meal. Sharing a meal is the best way to bond with people. However, if you're not up for dinner on some nights – perhaps you're feeling tired and want a bit of time for yourself – this is also fine. Be sure to let your trip leader know up front that you'll skip dinner.

12. Take care of places you're visiting. Leave nothing but footsteps, as they say, and we agree! We encourage you to use reusable shopping bags instead of plastic ones. Also, please bring refillable water bottles for the destinations where tap water is drinkable. This information will be disclosed in our Trip Notes.

13. Make yourself familiar with our guidelines and policies especially the Communicable Disease Policy.

It would be helpful if you download it to your phone so you have it with you during your trip!