

Why travellers should learn the language of their destination

Global travel increases every year despite our advanced technological connections that enable us to communicate across and experience the world without leaving home. This is because there is no substitute for first-hand experience. The experience of travelling - short or long term, for leisure or pleasure, for life experience or to settle in a new country - is greatly enhanced by the ability to speak the language of your destination.



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This is the view of Richard Rayne, CEO of iLearn - a South African learning solutions company. "It stands to reason that you are going to have a richer, far more immersive experience in a foreign country if you can speak the language," says Rayne. "As a tourist, culture and people open up instead of bypassing you; you transform from a spectator into a partaker. If you're doing business, it's far easier to establish the authentic, value-driven relationships so necessary for meaningful commerce to take place. If you're an immigrant, it is absolutely essential for proper assimilation, getting on your feet, finding decent work and getting ahead in your new country."

A valuable cognitive exercise

Learning other languages also significantly boosts your brain power. It's a valuable cognitive exercise, and one of the very best workouts for the brain, enhancing all kinds of capabilities. There's a wide array of research that shows that adults who speak more than one language are:

- Better critical-thinkers, decision-makers and planners;
- More perceptive about their surroundings
- Better at understanding others' viewpoints
- More effective at prioritising, focusing, concentrating and paying attention
- Have better memory and memorisation skills

Doors and places open

"There's so much to gain from becoming fluent in additional languages in our globalised, mobile world," explains Rayne. "Many native English speakers think it is not as necessary for them as it is for others to learn another language, but that's far from true. As widespread as English may be as a second language, that coverage is still minuscule in the context of a

world with about 6,500 spoken languages. Besides, far more doors and opportunities, places and people open up to you, and in different ways, when you are the one to engage in the first language of your destination.”

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