



Travel as a Political Act: A Radical Guide to Meaningful Travel

Rick Steves

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Since the first trip he took with his parents as a boy of fourteen, travel writer and businessman Rick Steves has lived a third of his life overseas, interacting with people whose worldviews are vastly different from his own. He makes a clear distinction between hedonistic travel that reinforces an us-and-them attitude and travel that is eye opening, challenging, and mind expanding—the kind he’s been teaching people for the past forty years.

Steves, who has received warm welcomes even from people in supposedly “enemy” lands, goes behind the scenes in the former Yugoslavia, still dealing with the legacy of a cruel war; Europe, attempting to unify disparate peoples and cultures while respecting their differences; the surprising secular Islamic cultures of Turkey and Morocco; Iran, where despite the bombast from leaders on both sides of the political divide, “most people genuinely like Americans”; and through the Holy Land, where, on both sides of the walls, bulletproof glass, and rhetoric, he found gentle souls facing big challenges.

Getting to know people in foreign lands and seeing how America looks from their perspective can have profound implications, and Steves writes that his “ethnocentric self-assurance” has taken a few good wallops. The kind of travel he advocates can shake us out of our complacency and awaken us to the real scope of global challenges, but it becomes a political act only if we *act* once we return home.

Steves’s experiences left him humbled, enriched, and tuned in to a rapidly changing world that, to survive, must replace hubris, bravado, and cultural blindness with knowledge, understanding, and activism on behalf of humanity’s common good.

KRISTINE MORRIS (January/February 2018)

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