

Vacations Of A Lifetime

Five Steps To Planning An Authentic Vacation

(NAPSA)—Part of the magic of travel is leaving yourself open to the unique experiences and unforgettable adventures that come with learning about a new place. Creating an authentic travel experience is all about interacting with the culture of the place you are visiting.

Fortunately, planning an authentic vacation isn't as difficult as you might assume. Here are five steps that can help get you on your way.

•**Choose your destination for its culture:** Choose a location with a culture you're interested in. The local culture will help shape the activities you choose. For instance, if your family is from Ireland but you have never been, perhaps you want to go there to better understand your heritage.

•**Immerse yourself in the culture before you travel:** One fun way to do this is by reading books and watching movies set in the destination you have chosen. If you get the whole family involved, this also leads to extra quality time before your trip! So for an Italian getaway, maybe you can watch "Under the Tuscan Sun." Fun and exciting family movie nights such as these can help you identify places you may wish to visit.

•**Choose accommodations that let you live like a local:** One of the best ways to live like a local is to stay in a timeshare unit. Such units often include kitchens and living space where you can cook according to the local customs. Many believe there's no better way to live like a local than to eat like a local.

If you want to give a timeshare a try, this can be an excellent opportunity to test the accommodations without a long-term commitment. For instance, sites such as EndlessVacationRentals.com offer deals on a variety of accommodation options, including vacation ownership units.

Or, if you are ready to jump into authentic travel by purchas-



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One of the best ways to live like a local during an authentic vacation is to stay in a timeshare unit. These often include kitchens and living spaces.

ing a timeshare, you may be able to add a vacation exchange membership through companies such as RCI, which allows you to swap your vacation ownership for accommodations all over the world.

•**Visit local markets and food stands:** To experience authentic cuisine and make use of the kitchen in your unit, research quality markets and farm stands before your trip. Or ask the locals where they do their shopping.

In many places, you can sign up for a class at a local culinary school or invite a chef to your accommodations for a private lesson. For example, if you're visiting the Greek islands, you can look for a local chef who can show you how to make traditional dishes such as spanakopita. The result will likely be a dish and a recipe you'll cherish.

•**Don't plan every moment:** When you're visiting a new place, it can be tempting to try to squeeze in every site, monument, museum and tour possible. But often, the most authentic experiences come when you haven't planned anything at all. Leave some time to sit in a coffee shop, or stroll through town without a plan. This can often be the best way to interact with locals and experience a city through their eyes.