

Summer challenge #2: Be a tourist in your own town

I am fortunate to live right outside Washington, DC. Every summer, the area is invaded by hordes of tourists from across the US and from other countries. As a local, I often find it annoying to have to walk behind a slow group of tourists who are taking up the entire sidewalk or to have to battle with out-of-towners for elbow room at a new exhibit at the National Gallery. But I need to remind myself that tourists are excited to be here, to see things they've only read about and to get to know our nation's capital. They are a huge source of revenue for the area. And, they are getting to see things I may never get around to seeing.

To be a tourist requires curiosity. It requires advance planning and research but also the ability to grab an opportunity when you see it (free concert today at noon!). It requires learning how to get around. It requires a willingness to try new things.

So you see how being a tourist really requires some important skills to any communicator.

Your challenge for this week is to be a tourist in your own town.

I know that not everybody's hometown is Washington, DC, but every town has something to offer a visitor. If you are in a small town, it will be your challenge to figure out what that is. Why would anyone visit your town? And if they do visit, what do they do?

Here's a few ways to be a tourist in your own town:

Go online or call your local visitor's center or CVB (convention and visitor's bureau). Ask what the **must-see**

attractions are. Check out at least one. Or, pick up a tourist guide for your town.

Spend a day walking around your town's downtown or main street. Walking...not driving. Maybe take a side street you've never been on.

Eat a **meal at a new restaurant**, somewhere you've always wanted to try. (You could also go online to see what the top restaurants in your area are and choose one.)

Go to a **local park**. Bring a picnic. Take a hike if appropriate. Perhaps you live near a river. What about renting a kayak or canoe?

Take a tour led by a tour guide. Perhaps there's a specialized walking tour or an eating tour that you could check out. Don't know if they exist? Look it up!

Visit a **local brewery or winery**. Take the tour, do the tasting.

Take **public transportation**. If you already take public transportation, take a different method (if you always commute by train, take the bus or take a different route).

When we live somewhere, we overlook what is there because we take it for granted. Sometimes, we don't even know what is there! By looking at our surroundings in a new way, we are seeing things differently. It may help boost your creativity or it may spark some new ideas.

Let me know what you do! Tell me what town you played tourist in. Have fun exploring!