

## In the COVID Era, Why Being a 'Mindful' Traveller Matters

Samiksha Pattanaik

Birgit Trauer, *The Way of the Peaceful Traveller*, The Cultural Angle, 2020. Available from [Amazon](#).

In this COVID era when every country is cautiously deliberating on opening its borders to foreigners, Dr. Birgit Trauer's book on how to be a mindful traveller is aptly timed. While this text can benefit everyone, journalism students can use the book to their advantage, especially those who dream of becoming foreign correspondents or travel bloggers.

Unlike many other travel books written on how to plan a trip or on real-life tales of adventure, Trauer's *The Way of the Peaceful Traveller* stands out for its originality. Dr. Trauer is an academic expert in tourism communication with first-hand experience of living and working in different countries around the world, including the Middle East, Europe, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australasia. This rich background is reflected in the author's philosophical and sociocultural approach that encourages us to view travelling not just as a means to explore what's "out there" but also to introspect what we don't know about ourselves and how we view the world.

The book is organised around specific themes related to travelling, such as emotions and feelings, needs and values, culture and stereotypes, and tourism. Each chapter presents the readers with a unique opportunity to engage with and relate these concepts to their personal life experiences and travels. In this process, it seeks to inculcate a sense of "critical mindfulness" – awareness and appreciation of the world within us and around us.

Overall, the purpose of the book is twofold. The first is to encourage the readers to be responsible travellers in the journey of life. Here, the author emphasises the importance of fostering care and empathy when forming relationships with people and the home environment. This is probably more crucial today than ever before, as the pandemic has created a widespread disconnect.

The second and most important purpose is to inspire people to be more caring and mindful when on a holiday, business trip, or while studying or working abroad. In this pandemic, we have certainly learned to appreciate the value of freedom – to travel wherever we want to and to do what our heart desires. But is travelling all about what we want? What about the needs and values of others in the host country? In our pursuit of adventure, we often don't reflect enough on how our actions might affect the local people and their natural environment. For instance, when visiting a warm and dry place, how many of us ask ourselves: do we need two showers or can do with one? Specifically, how can using extra water in shower affect a local farmer? Using these simple yet effective examples, chapter five on tourism – also one of the most interesting chapters in the book – provides an insightful guide on who is a 'bad' tourist and how to address such behaviour.

In short, the key message in the book is to travel with "a thoughtful heart and a caring mind." Though the author draws on research from various domains, the book is far from being pedantic. Rather, its interactive style, combined with checklists and activities, makes the topics more reflective and engaging for the readers.

*Samiksha Pattanaik is a PhD student at Massey University, but is currently working remotely on her research from India because of COVID19 restrictions on travelling. Previously, she was a journalist at CNN-News18 and Hindustan Times in New Delhi.*