

Rick Steves'
EUROPE

THROUGH THE BACK DOOR, INC.

130 Fourth Avenue North
PO Box 2009, Edmonds, WA 98020-2009
Tel: 425.771.8303 • Fax: 425.771.0833

Dear Teacher Traveler,

We received a mountain of requests for *Travel as a Political Act* from teachers and professors. I'm thrilled so many are able to use it in their classroom.

Teachers from around the country are already integrating it into their curriculum:

"I'd doubt that more than a couple of my students will have visited any of the countries mentioned in the book, but all will have (mis)conceptions about them... The book's emphasis on the important of getting to know, understanding "others" who are "different" as strong parallels with education." –Professor Al Forsyth, Weber University

*"As a book that is both engaging and understandable, *Travel as a Political Act* could be used for many purposes – communicative grammar instruction, genre awareness and modeling, business and economics, and as a window into US deep culture – to name a few."* – Professor Angela Bosche Thevenot, University of Memphis

In order to foster further dialog with teachers, I've created a special section on my website (www.ricksteves.com/teachers) just for you. It's a forum designed to facilitate discussion on how *Travel as a Political Act* can be used to inspire students to develop a global perspective.

If you decide to use this in your classroom, please contact Elizabeth Tabasko at 800-810-4145 x4691 or elizabeth.tabasko@perseusbooks.com for a special bulk rate.

Happy Travels (even if it's in a classroom),



Rick Steves

www.ricksteves.com

Travel as a Political Act

Discussion Points

1. Rick says, "Travel connects people with people. It helps us fit more comfortably and compatibly into a shrinking world." Who does he mean by "us" and why does "people to people" matter?
2. Relate the Bosnian war to the "Troubles" in Ireland.
3. In the former Yugoslavia, Rick met several equally likeable people from different sides of the conflict, making it difficult for him to "take sides." Why is it so tempting to decide who are the "good guys" and who are the "bad guys"? And what are the pitfalls in doing this?
4. Is Europe naïve to believe that unification through the European Union will avoid war in the future? What is driving unification in Europe?
5. With close to 40% of the world's population living on less than \$2 a day, is it ethical for Americans to spend their disposable income on travel?
6. Would you want to spend your vacation time traveling "as a political act," or would you prefer to use it as a time to recreate and relax? Why? Must you choose one or the other?
7. Can the Christian world and the Muslim world live in peace? What insights can travel in Turkey and Morocco provide?
8. There is a tug-of-war between secular forces and right-wing fundamentalism occurring in the Muslim world. Is a similar tug-of-war occurring in the United States? What is driving this? How is it similar? How is it different?
9. Switzerland provides heroin users with government-subsidized syringes to curtail the spread of HIV. The Dutch stopped arresting pot smokers 25 years ago. Discuss both the morality issues and the harm-reduction issues of a nation's drug policies. What is pragmatic? What should the goal of a nation's drug policy be?
10. Is it okay to visit a country at odds with the USA? What are the ethical issues?
11. Conservative Iranians claim their dress codes and policies regarding women are based on respect. They believe that Western fashions and media exploit women's bodies for crass commercial gain, which is immoral. Is this valid? Defend a hot babe used to sell cars on a TV commercial. Defend requiring women to cover their bodies.
12. Rick encourages travelers to "be an advocate for those outside of the US who have no voice here, but are affected by our policies." Do you feel a responsibility to consider those outside America's borders when you vote? Why or why not?
13. Discuss how the news you read or hear may affect your assumptions about the world. Is it possible to find balanced news sources?
14. Discuss ways in which everyday people (who aren't politicians or journalists) can challenge Americans to better understand our world.
15. If you could travel anywhere in order to enjoy "travel as a political act" where would you go and why?