

Jogging at dawn in Germany recently, I encountered the town policeman. "Guten tag!" I called out like a local citizen, and the answer was in perfect English, "And good morning to you, too, sir!" How he knew I was an American was a mystery to me, but I'm sure he was amused by my attempt to speak a few words in his language. Just as we appreciate visitors to our country who speak at least a few words in English, people of other lands have more respect for American tourists when we make at least a basic attempt to communicate in their language. Sometimes just a simple word of thanks, a smile and a compliment in the country's language can go a long way.



Before you begin your travels to a country, the internet can help you put together some ways to communicate. For instance, here are just ten phrases in Spanish that may get you attention and respect in the many countries of the world where the language is spoken.

1. Hello (Hola)
2. Please! (Por favor!)
3. Thank you! (Gracias!)
4. Where's the bathroom? (Donde esta el bano?)
5. Can you help me? (Me puede ayudar?)
6. Do you speak English? (Hablas ingles?)
7. I need a doctor (Necesito un medico)
8. I don't speak Spanish (No hablo espanol)
9. How much does it cost? (Cuanto es?)
10. Happy to meet you! (Encantado de conocerle!)

Of course, those few basic words are just a hint of what senior travelers can do to educate themselves. The age of carrying little phrase books is long past. Today, senior travelers can buy little electronic translators that carry entire languages in them, compete with illustrations and talking teachers. A hit on the keyboard can bring instant translations, pronunciations, explanations, complete sentences and much more in languages from any part of the world. Some translators are voice-activated, and new developments in hand-held ones are happening all the time. They once sold for several hundred dollars, but now simple miniature, light-weight versions cost as little as \$20.

If you intend to spend any time in a country, you should do much more than just memorize a few words and phrases. Sign up for lessons at a local school, enroll in an online language course or otherwise get yourself familiar in the language. Shop for an electronic translator before you leave home and spend some time practicing with it. Then carry the little magic box along everywhere on your future travels.

Once you break the language barrier, even just a bit, you'll be surprised and delighted about how much you'll surprise and delight people in many lands around the world.