

# Are you a traveler or a tourist

Scoring checklist for teachers

1. If you answered yes to this question, you're probably more of a tourist than a traveler. If you answered no, you probably have traveler tendencies.

Tourists typically have a mission in mind when they travel. For example, according to the National Geographic Society, [90 percent](#) of all visitors to the Grand Canyon congregate at the South Rim, snap pictures, and leave within hours. I would argue that most of these people are tourists because of their singular focus on their main compulsion to just see this natural phenomenon.

According to the English journalist, novelist, and essayist [Gilbert K. Chesterton](#), "The traveler sees what he sees, the tourist sees what he has come to see."

2. If you checked the third box under this question, it's safe to assume you're a traveler. Travelers tend to be a bit more reflective than tourists. As *New York Times* bestselling author [Pat Conroy](#) wrote, "**Once you have *traveled*, the voyage never ends, but is played out over and over again in the quietest chambers. The mind can never break off from the journey.**" (The italics are mine.)

If you checked the first box under question 2, you're most likely a tourist (see explanation in answer 1 regarding those who are mission-oriented). If you checked the middle box, you're a little of both.

3. A few years ago, I took a spring [trip to the Southwest canyons](#). I have a rather active fear of heights, and after about our fifth or sixth trek on narrow paths next to sheer drop-offs in sweltering heat, our group paused for a water break. I honestly didn't know if I could physically go on. Our guide, [nature photographer Eric Rock](#), told us, "Tourists travel through a location by seeing it from a window or a deck. Travelers allow themselves to be immersed in the spot. When you let yourself get dirty, wet, muddy, and cold, then you have found a place."

If you chose "wander the nearby streets, no matter the weather conditions" for question No. 3, score one on the traveler endpoint of the continuum. If you chose "relax in the lounge of your hotel by reading a book or people watching," mark this on the tourist side. If you chose "take a nap in your room," well, it's a wash. We all get tired on trips -- especially on that sixth hike in hot sun on the brink of an abyss.

American writer [Daniel J. Boorstin](#) once penned, "The traveler was active; he went strenuously in search of people, of adventure, of experience. The tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him. He goes 'sight-seeing.'"

4. If you checked either of the first two boxes on this one, you're a tourist. Because you are mission-oriented (see answer 1), your main reason for traveling is to see the places and take part in the events you've always dreamed of seeing and doing. If this doesn't happen, it will be annoying and not what you expected to get out of the trip. If you're a go-with-the-flow type, then you're probably a traveler, as *Merriam-Webster's* defines it, who's on a journey, wherever it leads.

The 1962 Nobel Prize in Literature recipient [John Steinbeck](#) said, "A journey is like marriage. The certain way to be wrong is to think you control it."

5. A good friend of mine who is an avid traveler recently sent me an e-mail. In it, she wrote news of her and her husband:

"In our current state of 'not getting around much anymore,' our wildlife viewing is mostly in our backyard, where we have a plethora of baby birds, rabbits, and squirrels. That makes it a happy hunting ground for the gorgeous male Northern harrier that often sits on the supporting pole of one of our bird feeders, about twenty-five feet from our patio. We have had harriers in our yard before, but never quite that close. We have Carolina wrens nesting in our defunct gas grill, and cardinals reposing in a hanging plant on our front porch, preventing us from watering it. We hope they fledge in time to save the plant."

This friendly message reminded me that if you're more of a traveler at heart than a tourist, your journeys have a way of continuing, even if physically, you haven't gone very far. As American icon and author [Henry Miller](#) stated, "**One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.**" I would add that a destination could also be to another season or climate.

If you checked either Box 1 or Box 2, you're a tourist. If you checked Box 3, you're a traveler.

Whichever category most of your answers tend to fall under, there are two more questions it's worthwhile to ask yourself while traveling. These come from [Rachel Carson](#), author of the classic book *Silent Spring*. She writes: "One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, 'What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?' "