



In many cities, guides must be licensed, while some are just locals trying to make a living. It's safest to deal with approved ones.

One couple told us they were in Marrakesh, Morocco, at picturesque Djemaa Al Fna Square, where the Americans were met by Ahmed. They asked to hit all the tourist spots in the Medina, the old city. He spoke basic English and promised he could guide them everywhere important.

Marrakesh is a maze of alleys and streets, and strangers have difficulty getting around without help. Ahmed took them to popular locations. It was a pleasant and safe experience. However, it could have been something else.

Here are tips if you decide to use local guides in foreign cities. 1. Set prices in advance and know what you are getting in the deal. Confirm how long they'll spend with you, where they'll go and clearly explain personal protection.

2. When with a hired guide, keep in daily constant smartphone touch with your hotel staff. Inform them of your guide's name and what you plan to do.

3. Do not be taken to unknown places or venture off where you could not return to your hotel on your own if necessary.

4. Be careful what you eat and drink. Even if everything looks clean and appetizing, your stomach may not be prepared for exotic food it has never experienced before.

5. Be prepared to be escorted to businesses that are connected to the guide, whether family or a financial set up. The guide usually gets a percentage of anything you buy. Unless it's an obvious rip-off, deal with it as part of the local culture. Of course, don't pay the first price quoted.

6. Don't reveal how much money you have or other details about career, family or trip itinerary. You can get to know local guides and have friendly conversations without revealing personal details.

In summary, it's always best and safest to hire local guides in advance through the front desk of your hotel.