

## TRAVELWEEK BLOG

### Fair Weather Travellers Steve Gillick

The expression “fair weather friends” refers to those of your acquaintances who are there for you as long as everything is going well (i.e. the weather is fair). But as soon as you start having problems and wish to discuss them with your friends (i.e. stormy conditions are on the horizon), then these people are nowhere to be seen.

Hmmm...sounds familiar from a travel point of view.

There are a lot of travellers who are convinced that a sun-shiny warm vacation is expected all the time and anything that deviates from this is, you guessed it, the fault of their travel agent. But we know that old expression: “Climate is what you expect...weather is what you get” which means that just because it is the dry season in Chile, you will experience some rain and just because it is the rainy season in Laos, there may not be a lot of rain during your vacation.

I think back to a classic learning experience on one of my long ago visits to Thailand. A friend sent me a letter (this was the pre-email era) to tell me that it was raining and cold in Bangkok and I should dress appropriately. When I arrived I was humorously surprised. The “rain” amounted to an afternoon shower—almost exactly at 3:00 pm every day—that lasted for possibly 10 minutes before the sun shone again. The “cold” was cold for Bangkok. Instead of the microwave-searing heat everyday, the temperatures had indeed dipped down to a low-humidity 80 F and this was, relatively speaking, colder than it had been in a long time. So I never did wear that sweater I brought or the ‘gale-force wind-tested’ raincoat that I stuffed into my luggage at the last minute.

Is it so bad that sometimes when you travel, raindrops keep falling on your head? Hey, I thought you were adventurous and were looking for a unique travel experience? Arrive with the proper gear, or in the least, borrow an umbrella from the hotel. In Japan and Korea and I’m sure many other countries, every corner store has umbrellas for sale for as little as \$5.00, so you don’t even have to lug them home with you if you prefer not to. And once you dress appropriately, get out there and explore!

A ‘real’ destination discovery takes in the full gamut of experiences that the locals live with daily. This means rain and sun (and snow and storms and monsoons etc). Are you really getting a ‘genuine’ experience if you just experience the ideal weather? Or are you falling into your North American this-is-how-I-like it frame of mind and imposing your home country, comfort values, improperly, on the country you are visiting?

Not all of us enjoy the luxury of travelling when we want, but we still want to travel, and travel for many is a self-re-energizing exercise where you can escape from your daily routine and expand your senses by taking in new sights and sounds and learning about people and places. So don’t sweat it if you happen to experience inclement weather.

To be clear, we are not talking about that long-sought beach vacation where the sunshine **IS** the vacation. In those cases, many tour operators are getting hip to the needs of North Americans and coming up with innovative guarantees for sunshine (similar to ski resorts that guarantee snow). What we are talking about are all the other types of destinations where you planned on walking or hiking or shopping or visiting a market, or taking in a world famous attraction. It will still be there, whether it rains or snows (and your unique photos of your vacation will testify to your determination to make the most of your visit) so see it when you can, throw caution to the wind, and **just do it** (*sorry Nike*).

The soomers, boomers, zoomers and millennials put the experience of travel over all else. They need to travel. As a travel professional who has, no doubt, seen it all, don’t let the weather dampen your client’s

enthusiasm. Ultimately it is their decision to go or not, but it is with your guidance that they can get acquainted with the 'pros' of travelling when the weather may not be ideal. Your clients will fare well whether the weather is fair or not.