

EPISODE 386

The Tourist Trap Test

How to Avoid Paying Too Much While Travelling

Full transcript · speaking practice · vocabulary review

Hi! I'm back with a new episode. Today, we're going to talk about **tourist traps**—and how to avoid paying much more than you expected while travelling.

Ok, let's start!

A **tourist trap** is a place or situation created mainly to attract visitors and make them spend more money than they expected.

Of course, not every expensive restaurant, taxi, tour, or souvenir shop is a **tourist trap**.

Popular places often cost more. A high price alone does not mean that anyone is being dishonest.

The warning signs appear when prices are unclear, **unexpected charges** suddenly appear, or someone puts you under **pressure** to decide immediately.

Imagine that you see a souvenir for \$5.

You ask, "Is that the **final price**?"

The seller smiles and says, "Of course."

But when it is time to pay, the total is \$16.

Apparently, there is a packaging fee, a card-payment fee, and perhaps a special fee for asking why there are so many fees.

Wonderful.

These situations can be uncomfortable in any language.

In English, they may feel even more intimidating because you are discussing money while someone is waiting for your answer.

You may worry about sounding rude.

But asking about a price is not rude. You simply need to remain calm and **slow the situation down**.

The first useful question is: "Is that the **final price**?"

The **final price** is the complete amount you will pay, including any additional costs.

You can also ask: "Is **everything included**?"

For example: "Is tax included?" "Is service included?" or "Is luggage included in the price?"

Another useful expression is: "**Could you explain this charge**?"

A charge is an amount of money added to a bill.

If a restaurant bill includes a mysterious "table fee," ask the waiter to explain it.

You are not accusing anyone. You are asking for clear information.

You can also say: "That's not the price I was **quoted**."

The price you were **quoted** is the price someone originally told you.

For example: "I was **quoted** \$24, but the bill says \$40."

At a restaurant or hotel, you can ask for an **itemised bill**.

An **itemised bill** lists every product, service, and cost separately.

This makes **unexpected charges** much easier to notice.

Another common **tourist trap** involves **pressure**.

Someone may say, "This offer is only available right now," or, "This is your last chance."

You do not have to make an immediate decision.

You can simply say, "I'll think about it."

Or: "**No, thank you. I'm just looking.**"

These phrases give you time and allow you to leave politely.

The most important rule is simple: **slow the situation down**.

Check the price before agreeing. Ask what is included. Read the bill carefully.

And never feel embarrassed about changing your mind or walking away.

Saving money is useful. But avoiding a \$45 "cultural fridge-magnet experience" is even better.

Let's learn grammar in context with Ben and his very special discount!

Let's go!

POV Story

Grammar in Context

Read the same story from two points of view and notice how the verbs and pronouns change naturally.



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01

FIRST VERSION

Past Tense

Past Tense - Third Person

Ben was visiting a small seaside town.

He wanted to buy one simple souvenir for his sister.

Nothing expensive. Nothing luxurious.

Just a small fridge magnet.

Ben entered a souvenir shop and saw a magnet shaped like a fish.

The label said \$4.

Perfect.

Ben asked the seller, "Is \$4 the **final price**?"

The seller smiled warmly and said, "Of course! And today, you receive a very special discount."

Ben was pleased. He had been inside the shop for twelve seconds, and apparently he was already a **valued customer**.

The seller wrapped the magnet in shiny gold paper.

Then he placed it inside a decorative box, tied a ribbon around it, and put the box inside a large paper bag.

Ben watched this **elaborate ceremony**.

He only wanted a magnet, but the seller was packaging it as if it were a royal wedding gift.

At the counter, the seller said, "That will be \$19."

Ben looked at the magnet, then at the seller, and then at the magnet again.

Perhaps it had become real gold.

It had not.

Ben asked, "Could you explain these charges?"

The seller showed him an **itemised bill**.

The magnet cost \$4. Premium wrapping cost \$5. The decorative box cost \$3.

The shopping-experience fee cost \$4, and the **discount-processing fee** cost \$3.

Ben asked, "Why am I paying \$3 for a discount?"

The seller explained that discounts required extra **administrative work**.

Somehow, saving more money cost Ben an extra \$3.

Ben decided that his sister did not need a magnet that badly.

He said, "No, thank you. I've changed my mind."

02

SECOND VERSION

Future Tense

Present Tense - First Person Plural

We are visiting a small seaside town.

We want to buy one simple souvenir for our sister.

Nothing expensive. Nothing luxurious.

Just a small fridge magnet.

We enter a souvenir shop and see a magnet shaped like a fish.

The label says \$4.

Perfect.

We ask the seller, "Is \$4 the **final price**?"

The seller smiles warmly and says, "Of course! And today, you receive a very special discount."

We are pleased. We have been inside the shop for twelve seconds, and apparently we are already **valued customers**.

The seller wraps the magnet in shiny gold paper.

Then he places it inside a decorative box, ties a ribbon around it, and puts the box inside a large paper bag.

We watch this **elaborate ceremony**.

We only want a magnet, but the seller is packaging it as if it were a royal wedding gift.

At the counter, the seller says, "That will be \$19."

We look at the magnet, then at the seller, and then at the magnet again.

Perhaps it has become real gold.

It has not.

We ask, "Could you explain these charges?"

The seller shows us an **itemised bill**.

The magnet costs \$4. Premium wrapping costs \$5. The decorative box costs \$3.

The shopping-experience fee costs \$4, and the **discount-processing fee** costs \$3.

We ask, "Why are we paying \$3 for a discount?"

The seller explains that discounts require extra **administrative work**.

Somehow, saving more money costs us an extra \$3.

We decide that our sister does not need a magnet that badly.

We say, "No, thank you. We've changed our minds."

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Thanks for listening, and I'll see you in the next episode.

Review

Vocabulary from This Episode

Review the most useful words and expressions before listening again.

01 tourist trap a place or situation designed to make visitors spend more than expected.	07 valued customer a customer whom a business considers important.
02 final price the complete amount you must pay, including extra costs.	08 elaborate complicated and containing many carefully arranged details.
03 unexpected charge an additional cost that you did not know about in advance.	09 processing fee an extra amount charged for handling a payment or request.
04 itemised bill a bill that lists every product, service, and cost separately.	10 administrative work organisational work involving records, payments, or arrangements.
05 quoted told a particular price before buying something.	11 change your mind decide to do something different from what you first intended.
06 under pressure feeling that you must decide or act quickly.	12 walk away leave a situation without accepting or buying anything.
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