

Using travel as a springboard transforms routine exercises into high interest, high impact language teaching activities. Whether you teach beginners or intermediate learners, travel themes give students authentic contexts for using past, present and future tenses, practising vocabulary for food, transport and daily life, and engaging with real cultural material.

Why travel works as a theme

Travel-based language teaching activities bring together culture, communication and practical reading in a single package. Students find the materials meaningful because they mirror real life, and the tasks can be adapted to any level. Travel prompts naturally recycle dates, times, numbers, locations and everyday vocabulary, so learners practise what they will actually need.

Postcards and postcard projects

Postcards are low-prep, high-engagement tools. Students can write to one another, practise letter conventions and use the past tense to describe trips. Use physical postcards collected from travels, or digital templates you prepare in Google Slides or PowerPoint.

- How to run it: Put student names and destination names on slips of paper, let each learner draw one of each, then write a postcard from the chosen destination to the chosen person.
- Scaffold the task with required research topics, for example food, sights and local customs.
- Extension: Turn postcards into speaking prompts for pairwork or create a classroom gallery for peer feedback.

Using realia to make reading practical

Realia are everyday items that travellers encounter, such as tickets, menus, timetables and adverts. These materials are designed to be functional, which makes them highly comprehensible for learners.

- Create a class realia scrapbook or display folder as a free reading resource for students.

- Give scavenger hunt tasks: find a telephone number, identify opening hours or translate a menu item.
- Use items for role plays. A boarding pass, for example, becomes the basis for check in, asking about gates and discussing delays.

Mapping activities and “far away places”

Maps inspire curiosity. Randomly assign countries or cities and have learners research ten cultural facts, such as local meals, popular customs or a famous landmark.

- Task idea: Write a third person narrative about someone from the assigned place, or a first person account of a fictional visit.
- Visual element: Include photos from free sites like Flickr or Pixabay to illustrate the wall display or slide presentation.
- Assessment: Ask students to present three cultural points and answer classmates questions in the target language.

Suitcases and TPR packing tasks

Packaging vocabulary into a physical task makes it memorable. Give each student a paper suitcase, then use total physical response to have them pack for a destination. They draw and label items, then present what is in their suitcase and why it is needed for that climate or activity.

- Use laminated postcards and Velcro so students can swap or reveal destinations as part of the task.
- Combine with clothing and weather vocabulary to practice adjectives and clothing nouns.

Scrapbooks and digital narrations

Scrapbooks let learners practise narrative tenses and sequencing. Students can create physical or Google Slides scrapbooks of an imagined trip, then record or present their narrative when ready.

- Beginner version: Short captions and labelled photos.
- Advanced version: Multi-slide narratives with time markers, reflections and

cultural observations.

“If I were” presentations

The “if I were” project invites deeper cultural research and personalisation. Ask students to pick a place and answer specific prompts: where would they live, what would they eat, how many hours would they work, what leisure activities would they do? Require eight to ten distinct elements and finish with a short presentation.

This task develops hypothetical language and comparison structures, while exposing the class to regional diversity within the target language world.

Planning trips and using Pinterest as a research tool

Planning a trip is a natural task that builds practical vocabulary and digital literacy. Pinterest works well because it functions as a visual search engine. Students can create boards for restaurants, hotels and attractions, collecting authentic descriptions and keywords in the target language.

- Secure option: Use printed images pinned to a classroom board for in-person activity instead of online accounts.
- Class collaboration: Create a group board where everyone must contribute a set number of pins and comment in the target language.

Quick resource list

- Photo sources: Flickr, Pixabay.
- Templates: Google Slides, PowerPoint or PDF postcard templates for easy distribution.
- Generators: Online boarding pass and ticket generators for realistic props.

Final tips for successful implementation

Start simple and add layers of complexity as students build confidence. Use tangible prompts, require cultural research, and make speaking the default output for most tasks. These language teaching activities keep learners engaged, give practice in

meaningful contexts, and prepare students for real interactions in the target language.

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