

Why Does Traveling Make You Feel Like Your Best Self?

Why do we feel so great when we travel? Is it the prospect of finally snapping that perfect picture of the Eiffel Tower? Is it the endless amount of delicious, new food (probably not, but it certainly helps!)? Is it meeting new people from exciting new places? Or maybe it's something on a much deeper level that keeps us coming back for more, always pushing ourselves to see more, eat more (seconds? thirds?), learn more.

Oftentimes, our passion and drive for travel is personal, but the reasons why we are our best selves when we travel are largely universal.



Here are a few reasons why traveling makes you feel like your best self:

Travel teaches us to be flexible.

Anyone who has ever flown on a discount airline understands the meaning of the word “patience.” Just the act of getting from one place to another can be a seemingly insurmountable hurdle, with flight delays, lost luggage, getting off at the wrong train stop, or bus drivers going on strike. Navigating a city in another country is not always the picture-perfect experience that Instagram would have us believe.

Even when at home and not traveling, when problems arise, we’re not fazed by them. Travel teaches us that when things are challenging or if everything goes wrong (like that one time you got food poisoning – probably should’ve skipped the fermented shark meat), we have to roll with it and make a new plan, without letting it affect our trip (....very much). Facing these struggles head-on makes us feel accomplished and satisfied – and these crazy-transit stories often turn into our best ones.

Travel allows us to trust the world.

The news sure has a way of making the world seem like a scary place. While we should always be aware of our surroundings and the climate of safety in certain countries, the reality is that even within countries that seem epicly foreign or frightening, there's probably a lot of beauty, too. Just like how the streets of south Chicago don't fully represent all of the magnificence of the Windy City, so too are there adventures to be had in destinations we're unfamiliar with (or slightly apprehensive of). But *boy, does it feel good* to trust your gut, squash the stereotypes, and move to a place of understanding and compassion rather than fear.

Now, we're not telling you to pull up your bootstraps and head into the uncharted wilderness of a dangerous place. But what we are saying is that much of travel forces us to put our trust in the kindness of strangers. When asking for directions on the street, recommendations for the best restaurant in town, or trading stories with new friends in a hostel, we have to constantly rely on others, many of whom might not even speak our same language. When exchanging money at the market, walking down an unknown street, or jumping onto the bus, we still have to rely on the goodness of others.

It's hard to be afraid of entire regions or countries once you've interacted in these otherwise-mundane ways. Seeing foreigners live their lives, smile and laugh, wash their clothes, walk their dogs, sharing ice cream with their kids, sitting on a bench with an elder, all of these experiences complicate our feelings of hate or prejudice, so much that it will probably make those feelings vanish entirely. It allows us to be open, to trust, to break down cultural barriers, and turn a once stranger into just another human (or better yet a friend).



Travel allows us to trust ourselves.

Navigating the Polish train system without a map (or a dictionary)? Hagglng in a foreign market, or planning an entire travel itinerary through three separate countries on the fly? Travel not only makes us capable of handling ourselves, it empowers us to accomplish what we put our mind to, too. In travel, road bumps (literally and figuratively) are a-plenty, and we must be able to problem-solve as quickly, and creatively, as possible.

This ability to be adaptable and tackle challenges, regardless of difficulty or language barriers, makes the challenges day-to-day life throws our way seem far more manageable.

Pursuing our passions and creating meaningful lives seems more in the realm of possibility. We see what happens when you live life free of the chains of “responsibilities” and “expectations” – often those that are put on us by others, like our parents, or that little thing called society.

We’ve crossed paths with those who shun the “norm” of life and recognize not only is that a possibility for the shape of our lives, but a really strong one at that. We’re empowered, baby! And we know that if we trust ourselves and follow our gut, good things are to come.

Travel makes you fall in love with learning.

Traveling rekindles the thirst for learning that we once had as a child, when we marveled at something we had never seen, turned to the person beside us, and demanded with bursting curiosity, “What’s that?” Traveling is basically a never-ending learning experience disguised as adventure. History books are one thing, but exploring another country brings the pages of that history book back to life. We learn from museums and galleries, from café corners and late-night conversations with locals, from the language of our host country.

Traveling reacquaints us with the joy of learning, exploring for the sake of exploring, and knowing we don’t have to cram certain facts and details into our memory for some stupid test. We can observe at our own pace, reflect as we must, and absorb all we can. For ourselves and no one else.

A love for learning can make life seem a whole lot more beautiful.

Travel makes us more social.

Even when flying solo, the act of travel is inevitably a social endeavor. When we travel, we are always making polite conversation, building new friendships, and testing existing ones. People are generally curious about newcomers – especially in small, rural areas – and eager to speak with them. The travel



community is one built on friendships forged quickly in the common rooms of hostels, where young travelers from all corners of the world come together.

Sure, you’ll be able to make small talk, but after having literally the same conversation with everyone you meet (where they’re from, where they’re going, how long they’ve

been on the road), you’ll soon learn how to ask the important questions – the ones that help you really get to know someone. The ability to make small talk *and* deep conversation (sometimes in a foreign language) is true skill that carries through in all aspects of life.

Travel puts our lives in perspective.

When traveling, we see corners of the world that are entirely different from our own. These differences can be social, cultural, or economic, but regardless, they often let us view our own lives through a new lens. This does not always mean that we see what others lack in life, and in turn, we realize how lucky and #blessed we are to have all that we do. Some cultures are content to live with much less, which can make our lives back home seem extravagant and materialistic. These sometimes harsh realities, and awareness towards how sheep-like our previous lives have been, can be *just* the reality pill that we needed to swallow.



By introducing us to new ways of living, travel forces us to reevaluate our own lives, get comfortable with uncomfortable truths, and pledge to look at our lives from new perspectives, often for the better.

Travel challenges us.

As human beings, it's not in our nature to sit idly by and accept things as they are. From building the first fire, to exploring the "surely-dragon-filled" edges of the world, to putting a man on the moon, humans are constantly looking for what's "next."

For those of us who are not astronauts, travel is, essentially, our moon. We are constantly pitting ourselves against challenging (and not always the safest) adventures when we travel, but the act of plunging ourselves into a new and unknown environment tests our limits and ourselves. Travel is the ultimate "Truth or Dare" on a physical, emotional, and personal level, showing us just what we are made of when things are difficult or uncomfortable or even just *different* from what we're used to.

Travel is good for our health.

Taking us out of our comfort zone, teaching us how to deal with new environments, challenging us to get off our phones and actively seek out new experiences, and helping us to develop our sense of self, these are all [reasons why travel is good for our health](#). No matter what your motivation for booking your next trip, you will always reap enormous benefits both mentally and physically. You will grow to understand yourself better by overcoming challenges, and you will literally boost your health by getting outdoors, walking miles through new cities, hiking to the tops of mountains, and diving off cliffs into crystal blue waters.

Travel makes us appreciate home.

It can be easy to become enamored with distant, rugged cliffs, the sounds of bells chiming from a Buddhist temple, or the thrill of local Spanish salsa club dancing in the streets. When experiencing these things, our first reaction might be to compare it to home, where our lives seem very mundane and safe. But really, traveling is a lesson in appreciating where we come from. Differences between our culture and the ones we are immersed in during our travels make us realize just how much we take from granted in our lives back home, from big things, like how we actually like the tipping system, to smaller things, like that we prefer seedless grapes.

You'll quickly realize that your relationships with people are your most treasured possessions and find yourself feeling overwhelming gratitude for the support system in your life. There's nothing like spending the holidays in another country, seeing other family units and communities coming together, to make you miss your family back home!

Travel opens us to new experiences.

Since the days of the first explorers, the ones that stepped into unsteady, wooden boats and pushed them out into open waters, travel has been about finding a *new world*. Each time we board a train, plane, or boat, we are embarking on something new. Exploring another country introduces us to new languages, new landscapes, and new ways of living. Trying deep fried scorpion as a snack? Ziplining through the Amazon Rainforest? Embracing the sometimes-awkward silence with my homestay family? Sure, why not!

When you're in another country, every new experience is exciting and worthwhile, so we are eager to try more. But, traveling doesn't just open us up to new experiences when we're in another country; it affects us even when we're at home. We realize that adventure is a mindset, one that we don't have to pack away with our prized souvenirs.



Travel alters our entire approach to life, making us adventurers.

Travel connects us with the world beyond our front doorstep.

Although we encounter many cultural differences in our travels, it is actually incredible how similar we are to people who live across the globe. Despite our diverse cultural backgrounds and daily lifestyles, travel allows us to connect with others and realize that we actually have a lot in common with that one friend living in Sweden. We also enjoy spending time with family, listening to indie pop music, and dancing on the weekends.

Once we've pulled ourselves outside of the safe, protective bubble of home, we can clearly see that we are just like those people hundreds of miles away. We are all a part of a bigger story; we all have more bringing us together than tearing us apart. It's this realization that breaks down fear and prejudices, making the world a much smaller, more welcoming, and connected place.

Traveling helps us feel like our best self because we are more willing to **receive the world's many lessons**, no matter their shape or size. It helps us **recognize our shared humanity** with others and dissipates fear or misunderstandings. After all, it's much more fun to love the world than to be afraid of it.

In travel, **we find the best in ourselves and in others**. We become the person that we had hoped we would become as a child: an explorer, open to meeting new people, and learning new things. And maybe, just maybe, someone who is brave enough to eat scorpions off a stick.

by **DANIELLE DESIMONE** –

How does travel make you feel?

“Traveling is learning”

-African Proverb