



The getaway plan

Something magical happens when you travel. Whether you're exploring a hidden cove, a dazzling city or a vibrant jungle, getting away can create an invigorating shift in your headspace. Sometimes, all you need is an escape to see things clearly.

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Why we wanderlust

For a lot of us, the desire to travel feels like an essential part of being human. Australians especially are known throughout the world for our endless love of adventure. We're curious – we want to explore, see things outside our secluded daily lives and experience the beauty, strangeness and sheer variety of the world.

“From a very primal point of view, humans are nomadic by nature,” says psychologist Christine Bagley-Jones, director of the Counselling and Wellbeing Centre in Brisbane. “Even though we have evolved, that innate desire to wander the lands is still embedded deeply in our psyche. Humans are also curious by nature, and travel lends itself to new experiences to grow.”

Experiences are precious to us, and collecting them can be revitalising. Psychological research has shown that spending money on experiences makes us happier than spending it on material goods. And because so many of us are getting out there and exploring different places, hearing each other's stories can fuel the desire even more.

“Travel is so commonplace now it's considered the norm, so many of us feel like we're actually missing out if we don't incorporate travel into our yearly plans,” Bagley-Jones says. “And on a purely superficial level, it's just a great way to recharge the batteries and have a bit of fun with those you love. So it's very easy to understand why travelling is self-healing for so many.”

Often the anticipation of travel is half the fun. Letting yourself daydream, plan and relish that tingly excitement can give you an energy boost that powers you through long days of work in the lead up. Sometimes, all you need is something to look forward to make dreary times seem brighter.

A whole new world

Getting away from your usual surroundings can give you the distance you need to see things clearly. When you're trekking up a mountain, wandering the cobbled streets of a fishing village or being dazzled by big city lights, your perspective can change, and insights can start to flow. A challenge that seems like a tangled mess at home can suddenly feel small and simple.





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"Once you're outside of your normal environment, you have the chance to reflect on your life in a more objective way. You're able to take a break and really consider what's important, what you'd like to change, and hopefully what you are grateful for," Bagley-Jones says.

"Being removed from those stresses of daily living is vital for so you can have that personal check in, to ensure that you are still on track with what you consider a happy and meaningful life.

"I encourage clients all of the time to take holidays and use that opportunity to assess how they are progressing as a person, family member, friend, worker etc. I even suggest they journal their thoughts plans and goals so that they've got a record of the wonderful epiphanies they have on holidays."

Experiencing different places and cultures also expands your worldview. Seeing how other people live can make you more compassionate and empathetic. Sometimes, it hits you right in the ribcage with a reminder of how lucky you are.

Then there's the magic that happens when you allow yourself to be awed by all the astounding natural beauty that exists on this planet. As French writer Gustave Flaubert once said,

"Travel makes one modest. You see what a tiny place you occupy in the world."

Out of your comfort zone

Choosing an adventurous spirit forces you to be braver, more resourceful and resilient. You have to embrace the unexpected and navigate unfamiliar places, sometimes with cultural and language barriers. Things go wrong, but you figure it out. The more you challenge yourself, the easier it becomes to do it next time. And that's how you stretch your comfort zone wider and wider.

"Stepping outside of your comfort zone now and again is vital for personal development. By being stretched in different ways we learn more about who we are," Bagley-Jones says. "It also gives us a chance to feel proud of ourselves for achieving something out of the ordinary."

"We are designed to thrive and in order to do that, growth is necessary. It's very hard to grow if you don't step outside your comfort zone now and again. The key here is to take all of the learning opportunities that you've gained while away back home with you so that you can incorporate them into your daily living."

Get the most from your getaway

Ready to jet off? Bagley-Jones shares some tips.

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Enjoy the anticipation. Create a substantial lead in time so that you can really get excited and tell people about your upcoming trip to increase the overall experience of happiness prior to embarking.

Be in the moment. While on the vacation instead of taking copious photographs to post on social media, just take a few shots to highlight the trip and then focus on experiencing the moment by moment joy that's really happening before you.

Let yourself relax. Consciously choose not to worry about the stresses back home. Take the opportunity while you're away to be inspired, generate new ideas and allow yourself to be released from rigid thinking that sometimes occurs in a busy structured life with many competing demands.

Take time to reflect. Whether you're going for a long weekend down the coast to lie by the pool, or whether you're trekking through Cambodia, allow your mind to wander and consider what makes you happy, and how to get it. Holidays are also a great time to read books that might help set worthwhile challenges or offer great personal insights.

Journal your experiences. This helps to solidify your adventure in your mind as well as offer a great document to read back on and spring you into a good mood once you've returned home.

Start planning your next adventure. A final tip to ward off the typical post-holiday blues once you get home is to immediately start planning for your next holiday. After all you know the old saying a change is good as a holiday... so why not do both. •