10 Things Traveling Teaches You That School Doesn't

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I wouldn't be the person I am today if I never traveled.

Growing up, my mom was a teacher, so I've been instilled with a great love for school. I recognize its importance and value, and even now in college I try to take something away from every class I have to take, regardless of how boring I may find it. With that being said, I know I wouldn't be the person I am today if I never traveled. Traveling has given me tons of great lessons, but there are ten that I know I'll never forget.

1. How to appreciate and learn from another culture

Learning about other cultures in school is one thing, but actually experiencing a culture is completely different. Whether you're visiting art museums, looking at grand architectural landmarks, or even just stopping for a coffee break in a happening café, traveling exposes you to people and lifestyles that are completely different than anything you've probably encountered back at home. Before you know it, you'll be picking up on local customs and falling in love with food you can barely even pronounce.

2. Patience

I have never taken a vacation where something doesn't go wrong. I've lost my luggage, gotten hopelessly confused with directions, maneuvered my way back to a cruise ship after the train I was on broke down mid journey, and was even in an airport when a bomb went off. In general, life doesn't always go according to plan, even when you're on vacation. Learning how to deal with the curveballs traveling throws your way teaches you how to be a more patient person in your every day life. Trust me, after you've haggled with a Russian man in broken Spanish, you'll be a lot more patient when it comes to dealing with your average, everyday problems back at home.

3. The importance of unplugging from social media

I think I can speak for most people in my generation when I say social media takes up a lot of my time. Constantly comparing your life to others based off of specially curated photos and the amount of likes or retweets something gets can be really distracting and even damaging. So for me, when I travel I love the fact that I'm often cut off from any Internet. I stop caring about what others are doing and instead focus on having fun, regardless of whether or not I can Snapchat how great of a time I'm having. After coming back home, I always realize that a life behind a screen can never compare to a life being lived fully.

4. How to live in the moment

In college, we often spend most of our time worrying about the future. What classes should I take next semester, should I go to grad school, will I get a job after graduation, etc. etc. Travelling, however, makes us all stop and just enjoy the moment. Waking up in a new, unexplored country incites excitement, making it nearly impossible to worry about the future or obsess about the past. The difference between experiencing every second of your life instead of dwelling on things out of your control is palpable and it's a lesson that's one of the most important to take back home.

5. We are not so different

Regardless of culture, skin color, geographical location, or language, everyone in the world strives for the same things. We all want to be safe, we all want to be successful, we all want to live lives that we can look back on and be proud of. By never leaving your comfort zone, it's easy to begin thinking in terms of "us vs. them", but nothing can be further from the truth. Once you travel, you realize that the entire globe is all striving towards the same goal: happiness.

6. The world isn't as scary as you've been lead to believe

If you watch the news as much as I do, it's hard to not start thinking that the entire world is a scary, dangerous place, but in all honesty nothing could be further from the truth. Granted, it's important when travelling to keep your wits about you and take special precautions, but in general, the average country is just as safe as the one you live in now. Danger is always out there, but you have just as likely of a chance of having something bad happen to you in the perceived safety of your home as you do abroad, so why let your fear inhibit you?

7. You're a lot more capable than you ever thought you could be

People always say that travel is a transformative experience, and I think that all stems from realizing that you are capable of far more than you ever could have imagined. As an introverted bookworm, it seems nearly impossible that I've done some of the things I've done. Whether I was standing up for myself in a foreign language, making friends with complete strangers, dealing with unruly crowds, or even efficiently planning a vacation, when I look back on my travels, I feel a sense of pride akin to finishing a marathon. Travel truly changes you, but in the absolute best way imaginable. Now, no matter what's thrown at me, I know I am capable of rising to the challenge and, most importantly, accomplishing it, mistakes and all.

8. There's no place like home.

Travelling abroad is a deeply rewarding experience, and I don't think I've ever disliked a place I've been to. With all

that being said, and as much as I enjoy a good vacation, there's nothing like coming home. Traveling to other places reminds me that the USA is absolutely awesome. Fried food, unfailingly good service, and an A/C unit that actually works are just some of the little things that you come to miss once you leave the country. When you live here, it gets easy to overlook some of the amenities you've grown up with, but once you spend a few weeks any place outside of the United States, it's hard not to realize just how fortunate you are to be an American.

9. Day to day problems aren't really "problems"

It's easy to get caught up in your own little world, where small things like a bad haircut or spilling coffee on your favorite shirt are life-shattering, but once you travel you realize that your problems really aren't that much of a problem. Seeing how the rest of the world lives first-hand in comparison to you makes you realize that you are beyond lucky to live the life you lead.

10. Stay humble.

Our whole lives we've been told just how important and one-of-a-kind we are. Once you travel you realize that's kind of bogus. The average person isn't really important in the macro sense. The world is a giant place, and we each just make up a tiny part of it. You, as complex as your life may be, are just background noise to the person sitting next to you on the subway. This sounds depressing, but it really serves as a great reminder to stay humble and not sweat the small stuff.

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