

The ‘How-To’ Travel eBook

(Excerpt – 23 Pages of 65)

An inspiring, no-nonsense Handbook for First-Time Travellers

OR

How To Escape the Rat Race



by Anna Ransome



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Sydney Opera House – one of the sights many people see when they first arrive in Australia

1 Introduction

What This Book is About

This book is for those first-time travellers who are thinking about quitting their job, selling up and leaving their home to go travelling. It is also for gap-year students who plan to travel, and will be independent for the first time in their lives.

I well appreciate that travel is a daunting prospect for people that have not really travelled before. And by 'travel' I don't mean a two-week holiday in Tenerife, with a job to go back to, I mean the kind of travel where you abandon your old life to take on a nomadic one where you won't know where you'll be from week to week... even day to day!

If this kind of life sounds exciting to you, then you will probably have decided to up and travel. You may have already packed your backpack and be wondering how on earth you will carry it! But it is likely that you'll come to a stage (usually about a week to a fortnight before getting on the plane) where you'll be wondering how you will cope on your own, what travel is *really* like, and whether you are actually doing the right thing. You are perfectly right to be nervous – this is likely to be one of the biggest life-changing experiences you'll ever have. I hope that after reading this book, you will feel more confident about your decision to travel and feel better equipped to cope with the oncoming adventure.

Perhaps you are not at this stage yet. Perhaps you are at the stage where you are dreaming of packing in your mind-numbing job and going off into the Great Unknown... the stage where the rest of the world seems so far away, and you long to start *seeing* it, but you are being held back by that need for security.

It is true that travel is a daunting prospect for anyone who values security in life. The thought of venturing to an unknown country and leaving friends, family, job and house behind is understandably scary to the majority of would-be travellers!

I am really passionate about travelling, and so I travel. But it seems to me that a lot of people are passionate about something, but never get to do it because they are being held back by something.

I once got into a conversation about travelling with a man from British Gas, who'd come to fix my radiator. He told me that his life-long dream had been to trek the Antarctic, and experience the beauty of this vast ice landscape. I asked him if he was planning to go there, and he replied "no. I can't now."

I asked him why and got the reply I expected. "I have a house, a job, a pension." Perhaps to him security was the real dream, and trekking in the Antarctic was just a fanciful notion, which is why he was still in England, working for British Gas. I am not denying that for a lot of people, having money, a house and a pension is the most important thing in life. This is the dream of many. But many people find that they are living this dream, but it isn't *their* dream. It is the dream that Western society imposes upon us.

If, like me, you have found yourself living someone else's dream, and feel there is more to life than a job you hate or a routine that bores you, then I hope by reading this book, you can overcome your fears and start living your own dream.

This book is about inspiring and motivating you to turn your dream of travelling into reality by exploring the reasons for travel, the concerns about travel, and how to overcome any fears you have of jumping into the Big Wide World.

As well as giving practical advice, this book gives a philosophical view of the importance of following your own ideals on how to live, not the ideals of parents, friends, or the society you live in.

How This Book Will Help the First-Time Traveller

The purpose of this book is to inspire you to leave a life you are dissatisfied with, to abandon your grip on security by realising that security is the ideal of our society, but is not necessarily the ideal of those that live in it.

It will encourage the gap-year student to make his or her own choices and not to be discouraged from these choices (unless of course, the choice is to jump about in a field of rattlesnakes, or to swim in the shark-infested waters around Fraser Island, in which case it is probably a good thing to be discouraged).

This book will help those who are thinking of travelling to come to the decision that is right for them by giving the reasons why some people travel, what to expect and what not to expect, and advice on thinking about what they want to gain from travel.

It will help those who have already decided to travel with practical advice on how to budget for travel, how to meet people once in another country and how to overcome the jitters that result from heading to the unknown on your own.

By exploring the relevant concerns about travel such as safety, hardship and loss of security, this book is able to help you overcome these concerns that are holding you back. By drawing on my own experiences of travel, I offer the reader an insight into how the first-time traveller feels when they leave it all behind.

My Own Experience of Travel

I left England when I was eighteen to spend eight months exploring Australia. Having finished my A-Levels, I was doing the typical gap-year travel before university. For a good two years before I set off, I had planned to travel. To fund my trip I had saved for these two years, doing various part-time jobs, then I worked full-time in a factory for three months at the beginning of my year out. By the time I left that factory and the mind-numbing work I always associate with factories, I was very much ready to go off and have an adventure.

I was also slightly terrified.

I was leaving home for the first time, leaving my family for the first time, going travelling by myself for the first time and spending my life savings. I was also doing all this in a place that is about as far away as I could possibly get from everybody and everything that I knew.

I hadn't opted to go with any of the travel companies that organised groups to travel together, as it would have cost me. Various friends of mine who had been keen to go with me realised they couldn't afford to fly to Australia, let alone feed and house themselves once they were there. Fortunately, to avoid disappointment, I hadn't really been counting on anyone to go with me.

What soon turned into a wonderful freedom was, at first, a problem; I had to make all the decisions. Not only did I have to decide what I would be doing every day, but also what I would be doing from minute to minute. Because that's the thing about travel... it takes you away from your set daily pattern. When 8.30 am rolls around, you won't be heading to work or school, you'll be doing...something else. At nine, you won't be starting work or school... you'll be doing something else. You won't have targets, essays, structured lessons or scheduled meetings. You won't have to do as you're told, because nobody does the telling.

Suddenly I knew what Sartre meant when he said the biggest angst a human has is autonomy... the freedom to constantly make decisions. It made sense then that we fill our lives with routine to make it predictable, and limit the painful decision-making process. We make regular work for ourselves to fill the void of freedom.

So I found myself sitting in departures, wondering what to do. Have a coffee? Read my book? Wander round the shops? Ignore curious glances at a lone girl gazing about, looking aimless?

I'd done the hardest part... and that was saying goodbye. Walking away from my parents and the only real security I had. The realisation that not only was I scared, but that I would actually miss my Mum and Dad very much.

Never had I felt so alone.

When I flew into Sydney, the loneliness didn't get any better. Decisions as to what I would do with myself didn't get any easier. I was in the biggest city in Australia and longing to make friends so I'd have someone other than myself to talk to. I was pretty self-sufficient, but after three days with conversation limited to how long and cramped the flight was, or how many nights I wanted at the Sydney Youth Hostel, I wanted to talk to someone properly; share the experience of travelling for the first time with somebody.

I also desperately wanted to get out of Sydney and start seeing the Australia that is so different to anywhere else I'd ever been. I knew it was out there. I'd seen pictures of Ayers Rock.

So I booked myself on a tour. It was a four-day tour of the outback of New South Wales, taking in the nearby Blue Mountains, Lightning Ridge and the opal fields, an old gold rush town, sapphire mine and some very out of the way settlements.

It was on this tour, juddering along dusty, stone-strewn tracks on a ramshackle minibus, that I first realised that I was going to be OK.

I was beginning to enjoy myself. My fellow passengers were friendly, the tour guide was great fun, and I was seeing the stark, semi-arid landscape that I associated with Australia. I had made a good decision.

I realised then that I could cope with travelling by myself, and moreover, I would *enjoy* travelling, whether I was on my own or not. With that realisation, I suddenly felt that I could do anything. I was no longer tied by my insecurities, my fears of travelling on my own. I'd confronted my fears and overcome them.

Swaying about as the minibus jolted over a pothole, I looked out of the window at the short, prickly vegetation and the brown grasses of the arid plains, the scant, crooked trees, and the chalky dust that billowed in clouds and drenched everything in white. I couldn't stop grinning.

I felt real independence for the first time ever. In retrospect it wasn't a coming-of-age thing. I could have instead moved out from my parents, been shackled by a job, and had a boss to answer to. For the first time in my life I had only myself to please. Only I would choose what I was to do every day for the next eight months. I had swiftly reached the stage where choosing what to do had become a joy, not a burden.

I made friends, who I travelled with for a couple of weeks. I went back on the tour, travelled back to the opal fields and stayed there for a week, with three other girls I'd met on the tour – from Israel, Canada and Germany. We had great fun.

Onwards with a friend to Bingara – another place frequented by the tour - , where we rode horses for a week. Then we met up with our friends from the previous week, and spent New Year in Byron Bay. After Byron, we went our separate ways to do our own thing, and find more friends along the way. My E-mail address book expanded drastically.

I had a fantastic eight months, seeing most of Australia, and packing more into those months than I had in my entire life. Feeling totally liberated from the demands and shackles of everyday life, I felt the kind of relaxed happiness that most people only feel at the start of a long holiday. I gained new confidence; I went sky-diving, bungee-jumping and diving. I walked desert, rainforest, and mountains. I even met my future husband.

I returned home in the English summer, holidayed in France with my family and my new fiancé, then started university.

Three years in one place with itchy feet, dreaming of Australia, was tough. I'd never felt homesick before, but now I felt a kind of travel-sick; a longing to leave and explore the new again.

After my degree and getting married, we were off again. - My husband has the itchy feet syndrome too. We sold our house, made some money from it, and went to spend the money in New Zealand, hiking mountains, volcanoes, glaciers, and dense forests. We saw the awesome sheer mountains of the fjord lands, the bubbling and brightly coloured geothermal areas, the aqua sea of Abel Tasman and the Marlborough Sounds, the alpine national parks...

We recently returned home, and are again facing the humdrum life of jobs and routine.

We've decided we'll go to the Sahara next.

Where did my desire to travel originate?

I have always loved seeing new countries. As a family we went often to France; a couple of times to Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Cyprus; and once to Spain. But the longest we ever spent abroad was three weeks. At the end of the holiday I would always get that awful sinking feeling. It was not so much the thought of leaving that particular place that would cause it. It was the thought of returning to England... to familiarity, the routine that wouldn't include seeing new sights and exploring the places previously unmapped in my mind.

As a child, on long, still summer evenings in England, when the warm air cooled and the sky was aglow with apricot clouds from the setting sun, I would gaze across the oceans of sky that had deepened to a twilight hue, and think the clouds looked like continents in the sky. I would dream of driving into the sunset to new landscapes... to warm oceans caressing white shores, to deserts lit to burnished copper in new dawns, to the dark, mysterious mountains I had never seen.

Years later as I walked from a wooden chalet-style bar decorated with mountaineer regalia; out into a young dusk framed by black, brooding mountains, the pink clouds that capped the summits to the North drifted apart and I caught my first glimpse of the glowing peak of Aoraki - the highest mountain in Australasia.



The sheer mountains of Milford Sound in the Fiordlands, New Zealand

2 Why travel?

I have often heard people say, “Oh, I had a good holiday, but I was ready to get back by the end of it.”

“Why is that then? Did you have an infestation of cockroaches in your hotel room? Did you lie on the beach for too long, and start worrying about melanoma? Did you find the cuisine induced bouts of diarrhoea?”

“Oh no, it’s just nice to be home, back in familiar surroundings, you know?”

For those with the traveller’s wanderlust, these words can seem very strange. For some ‘familiar surroundings’ means boredom and predictability, but for others it represents a kitchen devoid of grease, roaches, ants and other people, an unoccupied sofa and a D.V.D player, candlelit suppers and baths full of bubbles, a comfy bed, a bathroom to oneself...

Those that want only to travel would rather be amazed at the views from the summit of a 6,000ft mountain than sit on a comfy sofa watching T.V. They would rather laze on a white beach under the warm sun, than lie in a bath full of warm bubbles. They would rather share sparkling white wine whilst watching a sunset colour the ocean crimson than have a candlelit supper in the familiarity of their home.

They would so much rather do these things that yes, they would and do put up with the greasy, infested kitchens, the rock-hard, lumpy beds, the lack of sleep and other, annoying people.

It is for those beautiful snapshots in time; those moments of happiness, those feelings of liberation and independence, that people travel.

The Unimportance of Originality

History is made by the great explorers like Captain Cook, Nelson, Columbus, the early Polynesian, Egyptian and Greek explorers. From times when the world was a Great Unknown, come the intrepid travellers; the people who mapped out the world we know

today; the people who were the first humans to walk newly discovered and often harsh, barren lands.

Today there is not much land undiscovered, no country unexplored. Unless you are embarking upon an original expedition into wilderness, any travel you embark on will most likely have been done before.

Only tiny snatches of dense rainforest, lonely stretches of icy land to the north and south poles, stark, inhospitable desert and high alpine country remains unseen by human eyes.

Travel is a popular pastime today, with many gap-year students setting off to find their independence and 'discover' the world. Every year thousands are trekking in the Andes, going Down Under, volunteering aid in Africa, seeing the Great Wall of China, the pyramids of Egypt, the Red Canyons of America, the ancient buildings of Rome... The truth is, in the age of Internet and television, you will most likely have seen a flat version of at least parts of your destination. And, when you get to your destination, every photograph that you take will be one of millions of photographs that depict the same thing, every word you write in your diary will echo the words of others who have experienced the same thing, every sight you see will have been seen many times before, every step you take will follow the footsteps of so many that have walked that earth before you. Many of the things you want to do will have been done, packaged, and sold as tours. Tourists like yourself will swarm over monuments of interest, places previously sacred, and beautiful countryside that swarms with cars, snapping identical photos to prove you have been there, and swiftly, with a voracious appetite for ticking places off the list, moving on. Chances are, the more amazing the sight, the more tourists there will be.

That could be considered the downside of travel, and something I discovered not long after entering Australian territory.

When I saw Ayers Rock change its hue in the cool desert dawn, it was with dozens of other tourists gabbling away in groups, occasionally stopping to glance at the great monolith. When I ventured into Kakadu to see ancient Aborigine Rock art that, for 2,000 years had told tribal stories of spirits and dreaming sites, I was accompanied by tourists

who would fire dozens of questions at the guide about where exactly *'Crocodile Dundee'* was filmed. When on a bus that journeyed through desert towards the shadowed outlines of the Pinnacles, I heard comments such as, "Eh, I didn't think much of Ayers Rock. Is that a pub over there? Fantastic."

There is no doubt that my experiences were sometimes a little tarnished by the great hordes of unappreciative tourists that should have stayed at home in their own pubs. But this frustration with others could not diminish the overall effect that the country had on me. I was warmed by the laid-back friendliness and hospitality of the Australians I met, I was stunned by the beauty of a country rich with diversity, I was delighted with my experience of the nomadic lifestyle.

I came to realise that the most important thing to me was *my* experiences. I now couldn't care less that my decision to spend my gap-year in Australia was highly unoriginal. I don't think it matters that thousands of tourists have seen the places that are so special to me, or even that everywhere that I went, I was stepping in the footsteps of others.

Point to anywhere on a map and someone else will be able to describe it to you. Talk about any of the adventures you have embarked on, and you will get someone say "Oh yes, I've been there. What was the weather like when you were there?"

But they won't be able to describe *your* reactions to a place or even how you see, smell or listen to a place. They cannot take away the individuality of your memories.

Travel is a highly personal experience. Although it's all 'been done before' remember it has not all been done before *by you*.

I often wonder why there is this need to be the first to do something or the first to go somewhere. Why not be content with personal achievements? It seems to me that it would be silly, after reaching the summit of a 5,000ft mountain, to look at the amazing views and say, "But this is only a small mountain, and I am not the first to climb it... Sir Edmund Hillary climbed Mt. Everest."

If we were that concerned about whether something had been done before or not, we'd hardly do anything at all!

So what else is it that makes people travel? What else do people get out of travelling?

There are so many articles that encourage gap-year students to travel, listing all the benefits to travel such as learning a new language, learning skills that will help in some future workplace, making a more attractive C.V showing how much you have 'matured'. They reduce the travel experience to a useful tool that can be incorporated into a career strategy, and give advice on how to 'use your gap year wisely', because clearly just spending a year enjoying your life is a waste of time.

Personally I think the career- obsessed people who write these articles are completely missing the point of travel. Those who think that travel is just something to 'mature you' and make you more attractive to the future employer, are not travellers, and consequently are not equipped to write these articles.

I don't doubt that the kind of volunteer work that looks good on a C.V will be a worthwhile and unforgettable experience. It is also a way of seeing some of another country when you have little funds. However do *not* feel that just because you don't plan to work on a trip, that your trip will be any less valuable. (Heaven forbid that you actually go to a country merely to see that country!) You shouldn't have to justify your choice to travel with how it will help a future career.

Unfortunately success is so often rated on what your job title or salary is, rather than on how much enjoyment you get out of life! Sometimes, for the lucky few, the two are related, but more often it is the case that people work only to live, not because they enjoy their job! For many living life to the full is travelling.

There are many more reasons why people travel, only some of which I can realistically cover in this chapter.

The Value of Experience

It seems to me that so many people look back on their life and wish they had done more, seen more, *experienced* more. Those who delve into their memories often come up with

a blur of school blended into work and routine, then come across a few memories that stand out such as a great holiday or the places they visited.

Those that travel and experience other countries, cultures, sights, will have a memory jam-packed with the things that stand out... gazing up at the immensity of Mt Aoraki, the temples of Thailand, striding along a mountain summit in freezing 80km winds, diving into a colourful reef world, how it feels to be on a deserted beach... in a rainforest... by a camp fire in the outback. A traveller can look back on his or her life and come across a rich diversity of experience. A multitude of the memories that couldn't be forgotten.

Travelling is a way of living life to the full, so by all means go out there and start making memories.

Leave the Stresses of Work

Travelling, once you get past the initial fear of the unknown, is the best cure for stress.

A job is what provides most of us with security, and we view our jobs as a lifeline.

Consequently we strive to do well in our jobs, and when things go wrong, we feel stressed at the prospect of being de-valued in the boss' eyes, or even losing our job and, at the same time, our security. Once we have loosened ourselves from this need for security... and leaving job, home, family and friends is the quickest and most effective way of doing this... we lose a huge burden of responsibility. It is hard to feel stressed when we have few responsibilities.

Leave the Monotony of Routine

For the majority, life consists of getting up by eight, leaving the house by eight-thirty, working from nine until five-thirty, home by six, dinner, T.V, bed. And then repeating this routine the next day and the next. For only two days a week do most of us get to manage our own time. For one of these days, we tend to be occupied with chores; housework, mowing the lawn and so on. With travelling you don't have routine, unless you count eating and possibly brushing your teeth every day. Admittedly there is the odd chore of cleaning your clothes every so often, but the essential thing is *your time is your own*. You have nobody except yourself to answer to. You choose when to do stuff,

what to do and see, even whether you'll get out of bed that day! (although getting out of bed is recommended if you want to see a country.)

Experience Freedom and Independence

It has been said that there is no such thing as freedom. Technically there isn't. Capitalism rules, and if you have no money, you're not going to get very far. You have to have money to travel comfortably, and to enjoy travelling. However, travelling involves severing many links, and by doing so, you become as free as you can hope to be.

When you travel, you force yourself to get used to being on your own, making your own decisions, living without a regular pay check, or knowing where you will be sleeping every night. You overcome the fears that arise at losing security. If your fears no longer dictate your actions, you are freed.

A lot of decisions we make are made in consultation with others. When we face a difficult decision, and aren't sure of what action to take, we can usually discuss it with others, which can help us come to a decision.

If you travel on your own, you have to make far more decisions with a lot less guidance. You can't really ask any fellow travellers "what shall I do today?" without expecting some strange looks (or a barrage of suggestions to see all the museums you aren't actually interested in). Whether you are a gap-year student who's left home and the constraints of parents, or an older person who has left the dictatorship of their boss (or even if you *are* the boss leaving the demands of the business world), you will suddenly find a world of options open up to you. As I mentioned before, I found this daunting myself at first, but once I got used to independence, I loved it.

Broaden Horizons

It is true that travelling gives you a different perspective on life. This could be due to distancing yourself from your old life and concerns. It could be due to experiencing different cultural and religious perspectives and beliefs, thus having something with which to compare your own society's values.

You are influenced by so many people. In everyday life those people tend to be parents, colleagues, peers and friends. When you travel, you open yourself up to new acquaintances from all walks of life, from a variety of countries, who have so many different ideals and opinions. This does make life more confusing, but it will help to open your mind, to realize there are so many different takes on life different to the ones that you have been brought up with. Only when you have a broad range of views can you even hope to come to any valuable insights or know *why* you think the way you do. It has often been said that travel can be a way of discovering yourself, and I agree. You're not likely to know *you, or what you are capable of* when all you have given yourself in life is a routine or set path to doggedly follow. You are not likely to know *you* when you have only experienced one way of life.

My art teacher once said that she had been bitten by 'the travel bug', and I now understand what she means... When travel is a way of life, when you are never truly happy unless you are living the nomadic, exploratory lifestyle, you have been bitten by the travel bug. Be prepared for this consequence, because the problem with broadening your horizons is that you will probably never be content with your old, settled and predictable life again.

(You may also start to notice and be saddened by things like the falsity and commercialism of our world. I've just discovered that the spell check of Microsoft Word recognises the word 'McDonalds', but not 'Aoraki' – the name of the tallest mountain in Australasia.)

Escape

A much over-used phrase that you'll no doubt have heard is; 'you can't run away from your problems'.

A good response to this is; 'why not?'

Of course certain problems in life should be faced directly, but believe it or not, your problems don't necessarily follow you like some bad smell... they *can* disappear when you ignore them and go elsewhere.

Because travel can change your perspectives on life, it so often happens that the problems that seem to escalate when you are stuck in the same place, job and situation, can suddenly become irrelevant, or at least easier to deal with on your return.

In my experience, travel, like time, is a great healer. Once you remove yourself altogether from the rut that you have been stuck in, or escape a place that is a reminder of the problem or of something you want to forget, then things can quickly improve for you.

Simple Enjoyment

My philosophy is; you only get one life, and so you should make the most of it. Enjoy it. If you think travelling will enhance your life then do it! For most people who do it, travelling is a great experience.



Herbie's Hideaway – silent gorges in Northern Australia

3 When People Try to Dissuade You from Travelling

Ask yourself what you want to get out of travelling, and whether it will be worthwhile for you – if it will be worthwhile, then here is how to deal with other's negativity.

When I decided to travel in my gap-year, I was lucky to have supportive parents. My friends all thought Australia for eight months sounded like a great idea, and my Psychology teacher even gave me a map of Australia.

It was the expected thing to do. My brother had gone off travelling the year before, and it was generally understood that, when you've finished A-Levels, you want to go see the world and 'broaden your horizons'.

Last year, when my husband and I sold our house and decided to spend half the money on travelling round New Zealand for three months, it was a different story. We had reached the age where we were supposed to be settling down and starting our careers, not gallivanting off into the sunset a second time round.

We were told we should invest the money, put it towards a house, save it in case we needed it sometime.

"I think you're making a mistake" and "You're being foolish" rang in our ears. People felt it necessary to voice their opinions on the matter, even though the matter really wasn't up for discussion. Fortunately we were both of the opinion that *this is my life, not yours*, and went anyway.

Yes, it's true that returning from travels, having less money, having to get work and find a place to rent *is* hard, but it's certainly not unexpected! I certainly don't regret the three months spent in New Zealand. I have some great memories, have done things I have never done before, and physically pushed myself harder on some of those walks than I ever have before! It was time and money well spent.

Perhaps you are lucky enough to have supportive people around. In which case, skip to the next chapter! Or, if you don't care what other people think, and definitely won't be relying on anybody who's against you travelling (because there's nothing worse than hearing 'I told you so' if you do end up needing help) then again, skip to the next chapter.

But for those that don't have any support, or if you find yourself feeling that distinct atmosphere of negativity whenever you broach the subject of travel, this chapter will hopefully help you to deal with it.

Why You Should Question Your Decision Yourself

First of all, it is worth asking *yourself* why you want to go travelling because a) you will more likely be able to convince people that it's a good idea if you are sure your decision is a good one (and a well-thought out decision tends to be better than a spur-of-the-moment one) and b) It's a good idea to know whether you actually want to travel before you start telling anyone your plans, because it's hard to back out of a decision that everyone knows about. In short, make damn sure you want to go travelling, and that it will be worth your while before you spend what is probably your life savings (remember travel is rarely cheap).

For example, it seems to me that if you just want to go to a country because a mate of yours is going, and you always have a laugh with them, you should seriously consider whether *you* want to see that country/countries. You should question whether if at any stage your friend wants to go off by his or herself, you aren't going to be left stranded and hating every minute of your time spent on your own in the country that you dished out hundreds of pounds to fly to.

Another example of a dubious reason to travel would be that you like the sound of lying on a beach doing nothing for a few months, or spending a few months getting pissed every night and not having to worry about work the next day. Seriously, that's the reason a lot of people go. When my husband first travelled, he went with a company that organised group travel. He found that a lot of people in his group (whom he kept in touch with) never made it out of the city that they flew into. They spent their entire trip in a drunken haze, stumbling round the dodgier parts of Sydney (namely, King's Cross), and never got to see the things that make Australia different from their own countries.

I noticed that a fair few backpackers – mainly gap-year students – would do nothing but lie on a beach or get drunk. Their sole mission appeared to be; go out, get hammered, return to bunk bed in cheap hostel.

If you're going to do that, then my advice is to go to Ibiza (or wherever is cheap and cheerful) for a month or two... don't waste over a grand flying to an amazing country like Australia / Africa / America, which have so much more to offer than booze.

Of course, I can think of many other examples of not-so-good reasons to travel. One of my friends decided she wanted to spend a year out, because she reckoned it would be like one nice, long holiday in which to de-stress after university exams. It took her very little time to realise that there are one or two differences between a holiday and travelling on limited funds;

1) she was staying in a dorm with other loud, annoying and sometimes smelly backpackers, not a hotel room.

2) Unlike previous holidays, she came up against some rather nasty insects... largely due to the fact that she sometimes took to wilderness tours.

3) On holiday her funds weren't quite so stretched due to the fact she was spending two weeks, not twelve months in another country. Therefore, unlike on holidays, she couldn't do things like windsurfing, horse riding or eating in nice restaurants every day. (And consequently she often had to use filthy, greasy, roach-infested hostel kitchens in which to cook her food, which she *definitely* did not do on holiday).

It turned out OK in the end because she adjusted, and ended up feeling relaxed and able to enjoy her travels anyway. But if you are the kind of person that expects things to go as swimmingly as they tend to do on holiday, and won't be happy if they don't, reconsider going. My brother told me before I left to go to Australia not to expect every day to be good. I was going for eight months, not two weeks. In eight months of anybody's life there are bound to be bad days. Admittedly, although expecting dirty hostels, a few nasty bugs, and irritating people, I didn't quite expect to end up in hospital with a broken shoulder within a month of first arriving, but still, I managed. (Or more to the point some new friends managed to carry my backpack as well as theirs).

However, if you are going for the right reasons i.e., you want to see another country (not just its bars), you know what you want from your trip (i.e. to have new experiences) and are sure it will be worthwhile for you... then there is no reason why you should be dissuaded to go, providing you have the funds to cover your trip. In which case, here's how to cope with other's negativity.

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