

TRAVELER'S ROOTS

**GROWING A RICHER YOU  
THROUGH A 6 MONTH+  
BACKPACKING TRIP  
AROUND THE WORLD**

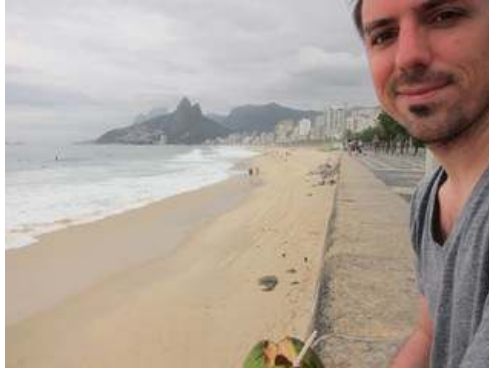


**SHAUN ROBERTSON**

**baladé**  
TO EACH HIS NATURE

ROOTSTRAVELER.COM

## About the Author



Shaun Robertson is a travel blogger who has been writing about worldly adventures beyond his bubble since 2006. A nine-month break from an office job opened his eyes to all the wonderful things our planet has to offer and quickly made him realize that there is more to life than sitting behind a desk and worrying about what possessions he did or didn't have. Through his words and experiences he has influenced others to seek more out of life. Readers of his work have been moved to have their own adventures and breakaway from the "normal." This is cited as his greatest and proudest achievement.

Shaun has started [www.thislifeintrips.com](http://www.thislifeintrips.com) to share his travel adventures, advice, and tips. Through this website he has set out to prove that world travel is within reach and is cheaper than you think.

# The Roots of RootsTraveler.com



You are mostly comfortable with unknown territories. You enjoy unexpected situations. You like to encounter nature and get in touch with your fellow human beings: sharing and exchanging could be your philosophy. You are welcomed among these pages--enjoy reading.

Thanks you for downloading this ebook. My name is Luc Foin and I am the founder of Baladéo and now RootsTraveler.com.

When I started Baladéo with my friend Stephane Lebeau in 1995, who could have expected this adventure to become such a great journey?

Baladéo, faithful partner of hikers and globe-trotters since 1995, offers over four hundred fun products and useful accessories to accommodate all adventures. We create small and light inventive pieces, easy enough to slip into a pocket, to use just around the corner or to the ends of the earth.

I love our products but I love even more the thousands of urban and wilderness adventurers who take our products around the world. During the past twenty years, Baladéo has taken me around the world to meet people from very different ends of the earth.

Whether on my own, with family, or with business partners, I travel the world with curiosity and interest. And if I do not travel *just for fun* anymore, I still navigate with the same energy to share with others. Yes, I travel now to

market, to buy, to sell—but not only goods: Baladéo is also about ideas, projects, commitments, and human endeavors.

Baladéo has been a great adventure, a journey traveled step by step, motivated by our will as much as by our clients' desire, an exchange that led us to the discovery that many of our customers are true globe-trotters.

For this reason, at the end of 2012 and the beginning of 2013, we launched our first grants program with an award of 10,000 EUR and hopefully helped a few travelers on the road. Beyond this event, we learned of the irrepressible enthusiasm of travelers from all over the world to and from their ends of the earth.

I then came up with the idea to build a community of world travelers. Through the unlimited possibilities of social media—offering an expansive territory of expression without the barriers of time or space—I decided to share my enthusiasm for travelling by meeting globe-trotters directly. I called this endeavor **RootsTraveler.com**

Roots Traveler focuses primarily on two groups of travelers: the ones who seek to travel around the world (those for whom travelling is not a vacation retreat but a lifetime pursuit) and the ones who seek a definitive excursion to explore the ends of the earth (those who make a short trip something unique, something thought for and beyond themselves, if for only a week or even a day). I write in English, even though I am French (nobody's perfect), as I would like to reach as many travelers as possible.

My first major project has been the compilation of two ebooks, to be downloaded through the blog. With the help of Shaun Robertson, to confront in black and white each of the barriers keeping you from enjoying boundless travel, we hope to impress upon these pages a demonstration that absolutely nothing is impossible once you really decide to endeavor. I hope you will find here the inspiration to follow your pursuits that will lead you to discover the world.

In the grand scheme, I wish [www.rootstraveler.com](http://www.rootstraveler.com) to become a platform for all who are curious about life and people—no matter who and no matter where.

More than ever—as we have admonished on the front page of Baladéo for years—turn off the computer and put down that remote control. Get out there into the world for a breath of fresh air. Create the journey of your choice: a discovery, a moment of reflection, an adventure, a much-needed rest, or just something else for a change.

So enjoy the reading of this ebook as much as I do...

If you want to keep being inspired:

**Subscribe to our Blog:** <http://rootstraveler.com/>

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**Enjoy our pictures on Pinterest:** <http://pinterest.com/rootstraveler/>

**Grab our “robust” gears at:** <http://www.baladeo.com/>

Shaun, it's your turn now!

Luc Foin

# TRAVELER'S ROOTS

## Growing A Richer You Through A 6 Month+ Backpacking Trip Around The World

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# Mindset.

(Preparing yourself for life beyond  
your bubble)

# Dream Big

All great things start here

“All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them.”

— Walt Disney

Think back to when you were a child. Chances are you had great ambitions to become something fabulous, something great. This could have been a superhero, a professional athlete, or a rock star. Maybe you wore a cape while playing with friends and pretended to save the world from evildoers. Maybe you played a mean air guitar. Either way, you were young and imaginative. You dreamed these things up because you could. To you, the world was yours to explore and nothing was going to hold you back. Chances are your parents humored you and encouraged this for a short time. You were probably told that you could be whatever you wanted to be. I suppose that is why so many of my friends became astronauts.

Overtime your dreams probably changed from fighting crime in your underwear to more concrete things like seeing the Eiffel Tower or learning to speak Italian. Maybe you have always wanted to learn to tango, play a musical instrument, or become the world’s greatest chef. Whatever it was, it was a dream, an ambition to be better, and a promise to yourself that you would grow.

For many, these dreams have faded or tiered completely. As you grew and gained more freedom and responsibilities your priorities changed to fit the world you lived in. You conformed, followed suit, and got in line. You did what people did, what was expected. You played it safe only to ask yourself what could have been. More importantly you should be asking yourself, when did it become OK to stop dreaming?

For those that followed through on your dreams I commend you. You are the very few that have beaten the odds. You didn’t listen to the negativity and the



naysayers that tried to hold you back. You persevered. You stayed true. Maybe you fight crime behind a badge instead of a mask or maybe you crafted your skills as a guitarist and are now playing the world's biggest stages. Maybe you are reading this from 250 kilometers above the earth. Whatever the situation is, know this; even astronauts still dream. And you should too.

No matter the stage of your life, you need to understand and accept that it is not too late (or too early) to make changes and to grow. I am here to tell you that dreams are achievable. They are. You just need to put the effort in and stop making excuses. You need to ask yourself, what do you really want to do in life? We have been given nothing but time and very little of it at that. You owe it to your childhood self to make the absolute most of it.

It's time to start dreaming again. Don't hold back. Dream big.

# Life Check

Are you *really* living?

“Open your eyes, look within. Are you satisfied with the life you're living?”

— Bob Marley

One of my childhood dreams was to become a writer. From as early as the age of six I can remember writing silly stories that were imaginative and fun. I recall the proud feeling I had after writing them and thinking that my work was quite good. For some reason though I had it in my mind that it was not a real job to pursue or that it was not something *I* could do. Perhaps I was embarrassed by the thought of my words being out in the open for others to criticize or praise. Perhaps I thought it was something that was better left for others to do. Even though writing was a creative outlet I truly enjoyed as a small child and into my teenage years, I outgrew it and would not pickup again until I left my world to travel.

Maybe your story is similar to mine. You finished college or university and got an entry-level job, a necessity to start paying back your exorbitant tuition fees. Maybe five years pass and you have made headway or cleared your debt only to be pushed back in the hole by purchasing a vehicle or home. You always wanted to travel but never found the time, money, or insert a plethora of excuses here. Maybe your girlfriend or boyfriend moved in with you because hey, that's what all your friends were doing. Perhaps that was the biggest mistake you could ever make. You wake up one day to realize how your life is unfolding in front of you. You have become comfortable and complacent within your bubble. You are familiar with your work, relationships, and the city you live in. Everything feels the same. Everything feels mundane. Your dreams of becoming something more and seeing the world are dying and so is your childhood self. You inevitably wonder if you are *really* living or just going through the motions.

Maybe you put in the effort and hard work. Maybe you became successful. Perhaps you are a doctor or a lawyer that has come to realize that being in said profession is not at all what it was cracked up to be. You find yourself working more and more and living less and less. Somewhere between mortgage payments and paper work you gave up on your dreams. You make a decent living but like many, live to your means. You purchase things based on wants and not needs. Soon you find that your possessions possess you. You argue with your wife or husband over their choice of throw pillows or the shade of red that is to be painted in the den. You argue for Midnight Rose Petal while your spouse stands firm on Loganberry. You start to wonder how it got to this point and that there must be more to life than decorative pillows and paint colors with marketable names. Maybe you are looking for change.

Maybe you are fresh out of high school and have no clue what you want to do. Don't do what over half my high school friends did, head to university and take general studies until you "figure out what you want to do for a living." This is a costly mistake that will set you back both in time and monetary value. For those friends of mine that went this route half failed or dropped out within the first couple years. The rest have a piece of paper that has done little to nothing to advance their careers. What they all have in common is debit and regret. If you are pondering this route take the money you will be burning and use it to see the world. You will come back with knowledge and experience that outweigh a piece of paper. When you return you will most likely have a clearer mind and idea of what to do next.

Obviously there are plenty of scenarios and paths that can deviate one from following their dreams. No matter your age, financial situation, marital status, or mouths to feed I say this; travel far and travel long. See the world beyond your bubble. I am not saying go to an all-inclusive resort for a week of buffet and tan lines. That is not travel. I am saying go beyond your comfort levels. I am saying see more. Do more. Go backpacking.

Traveling with nothing more than the contents carried on your back is an experience that will open your eyes to the amazing things this world has to offer. You can live life in a different country and experience the day-to-day

from a different perspective. You can take the time to learn something new like Mandarin lessons or practicing Kung Fu in China. You can let your inner artist out by finding inspiration from around the globe to create. Paint cherry blossoms or photograph Shibuya crossing in Japan, or write that novel you have put off from a hip coffee shop in London. Whatever your passion, backpacking will open your eyes to what is out there as well as what is inside of you. It will lead to adventure, new experiences, and insight.

By no means am I saying you are to run away from your responsibilities or commitments. That's not what this is about. I am saying to reevaluate them. I am saying to get back on track with what excites you. Backpacking around the world will help you achieve this and so much more. I am setting you on a path for change. Taking extended leave off of work or from studying to *just travel* is an understatement to say the least. If you are planning on learning a foreign language, volunteering, perusing a business idea, or just seeing the sights, know that you are living. You are taking control of your life and living it. This realization is a wonderful thing.

It's time to start living again. Don't hold back. Live big.

# Head Check

Evading the evasions

“The only thing standing between you and your goal is the bullshit story you keep telling yourself as to why you can't achieve it.”

— Jordan Belfort

In 2006 I traveled abroad extensively for 9 months; which pales in comparison to the 3 years I took humming and hawing about it before finally going through with it. I had almost every excuse imaginable not to go through with it. Work commitments, relationships, a house that was falling apart, and a steady routine all played a role in delaying the best thing I have done with my life. In the end they all boiled down to the same thing, fear; or more specifically fear of failure, fear of the unknown, fear of change. I evaded this decision for 3 years and now those 3 years are gone. I will never get that time back. Don't lose 3 years of your life. Stop making excuses. Start making decisions.

Deciding to backpack for an extensive period is an up hill battle. For most it is a fight that is given up on before even starting. This is a shame, as we all know it can be won. Even with all the excuses available we know it is achievable. We have seen it done. We all have friends that have packed up their lives and chose to travel around the world. They have taken a GAP year, a walkabout, became a vagabond or a globetrotter. No matter the term used, they are the ones living and you are the one stuck hearing about it. You know what I mean by this. They are the jerks that post annoying Facebook status updates like “Having a great time in Kyoto!” or “Just witnessed the most beautiful sunset from my tent on Cape Leveque. Loving life!” Barf. They are also the assholes that post pictures of them riding a camel in the Sahara or feeding a baby white tiger in Bali. Give me a break right? Our natural reaction might be annoyance but not so deep down, don't *you* secretly wish you were that asshole? Don't *you* want to feed a baby white tiger in Bali? “Well yes, but I couldn't leave my

job. I'm far too important." You can and no, you're not. "Well, I don't make enough money to travel like that." You do. It's cheaper than you think. "What about my overweight, diabetic cat? I can't leave her" There are options. There are always options. Stop making excuses. Feed a baby white tiger in Bali.

You see excuses are just that. They are mental roadblocks put in place to make us feel like it is OK not to change or take a risk. They are crutches we often use that slow us from growing. It is easy to find justification not to do something. It takes little to no effort not to change, but in the end where does that get you? How about the same job, relationship, and overall outlook on life? If any of those things have gotten you down know that your excuses won't bring you back up. They will hinder and they will prolong. Your asshole friends struggled through all the same excuses and you can too.

What about the "What if's?" Well they are just excuses disguised as questions that can put off something wonderful. I am not saying that there aren't valid questions and concerns about such a giant step in your life. Obviously there are. I am saying that they shouldn't hold you back. It's important to get in the right headspace. The sooner you accept this mindset, the sooner you can move this journey forward. In life attitude is everything. You can choose to make excuses and take a pessimistic approach to life's challenges or you can take them on with a positive approach and use your energy to expand instead of restrict.

Still not convinced? Here is a list of some of the most common "What If" questions one would ask when thinking about backpacking or traveling around the world for an extensive period:

**What if I lose my job?** – First ask yourself if you are actually happy with your job or just comfortable. Is it leading somewhere or is it a dead-end?

Answering those questions truthfully can make this decision easier. If you are lucky enough to be in a workplace you truly love and enjoy then focus on making yourself as valuable as possible. Chances are your company is not as opposed to the idea of extended leave as you think. Talk open and explain the alternative if they wont grant you the leave.

**What if I get lost?** – Chances are you will...a lot. Chalk it up to an experience. Don't be afraid to ask for directions, people are helpful by nature. Use landmarks such as buildings, mountains, and bodies of water to get your bearings when arriving in a new place and know the areas to avoid at night or if you are alone.

**What if my girlfriend/boyfriend/partner doesn't want to go/want me to go** – Chances are you are not on the same page. If they can't grasp why you want to travel or accept it then you may want to reevaluate your relationship. Are you truly happy? Do you realistically see a future together? This can be hard. That I know.

**What if I lose or damage my passport?** – This is a common question and is more of a nuisance than a deal breaker. Visit your country's nearest consulate. They are there to help in a situation such as this. Having a scanned copy or duplicate of your photo page can be helpful too.

**What if I run out of money?** – Chances are you have options. First and foremost, plan accordingly by setting aside for the unexpected. This means for any issues that may arise while away on the road or back at home. Have a spare bankcard with you but not on you in case one is lost/stolen. Have a credit card set aside for emergency use only. Pending on your situation you can work for room and board at a hostel or find odd jobs that can help get you back on track.

**What if I get mugged?**– It happens. I won't sugar coat it. Even if you are careful and cautious, it still happens. Be smart and be safe. Minimize your risk. Carry little cash and valuables on you and be aware of your surroundings. This is tough to get across but do these things without being overcautious. 99% of people on this planet are human. Don't let the 1% deter you.

**What if I get homesick?**– You will. Not all days will be great. You will miss your family, your friends, and your home. Thankfully we live in a time where they are all just a video call away. Staying in touch has never been easier. Set aside time to do just that. Also, staying positive and reminding yourself of the mundane or the reasons why you left will help.

How about this “what if” ...

**What if I don't go?**- Focus your energy on answering that question. Think about what you could be missing out on and the excuses that you are using. Know this, “the what if's” certainly don't outweigh the experiences that this world has in store for you. Move past them.

It's time to start evaluating your life and how you are living it. Think back to your dreams, your ambitions. Are you on that path? If not, why did you stray? Think about your priorities. If they lie anywhere else other than family, friends, and your overall happiness you need to rearrange them. Are you happy with how your life is turning out?

Stop living your life thinking about what could have been. Evade the evasions.



# Assemble.

(Putting the pieces into place)

# Plan to Fail/Fail to Plan

Choose your path

“If you don't know where you are going,  
you'll end up someplace else.”

— Yogi Berra

For years I have wanted to go to Australia and to this day I don't know why. I mean I know it's a beautiful country with a pristine and unspoiled coastline, but why Australia? I am not a huge fan of the beach and I burn easily. I have a mild case of arachnophobia and I feel uncomfortable using the word “mate” in day-to-day conversation. So why of all places would I have my mindset on Oz? Growing up watching Crocodile Dundee and Steve Irwin wrestle crocodiles may have had something to do with it but truthfully it was probably the idea that it seemed like a warm North America. This made it seem like a safe and easy choice. So, at the age of 20 or so I had it settled. I would backpack across Australia. Picking the destination was the easy part, or so I thought. Over the next few years I purchased travel guides on Australia, took scuba diving lessons, and read Bill Bryson's “In a Sunburned Country”. I was to use this newly acquired knowledge, skill, and insight on my great adventure down under. I was set. So with all this planning and preparation, why did it take me five years to actually travel abroad and why, to this day, have I not been to Australia? Depending on how you look at it, I was planning to fail or failing to plan.

One can say that there are two mentalities when it comes to backpacking around the world, planning a route or leaving it to blind luck, faith, and feeling. It's easy to get carried away planning elaborate routes and details down to the finest point like where you will find your favorite shampoo or what lokanata to eat at in Turkey. The sheer excitement of the idea of traveling mixed with readily available information on the Internet makes planning out your trip easy and fun. Be warned though, planning too closely will leave little wiggle

room for the unexpected, and the unexpected is often the most memorable. Taking a last-minute train connection in Gothenburg to Copenhagen just because you want to eat a Danish pastry in Denmark is harder to pull off if you have a non-refundable flight booked out of Oslo.

On the flip side, it takes a very carefree and free spirited person to leave the details to chance. I have met several people who travel this way and all of them have seemed unique to say the least. While on a ferry from Tangier Morocco to Algeciras Spain I chatted with a young Swedish backpacker, maybe 21 years old max, who had just finished biking his way from the southern tip of Africa all the way to the very top. When asked why he simply said it started as a way to get from Cape Town to Johannesburg. He met other cyclists on the way and was invited to join them on their trip to the Serengeti. When asked if it was difficult he said that there were days that were better than others. He was mugged 3 times but said he was never in any real danger. They paled in comparison to the wild life and scenery he experienced along the way. I was hanging on to his every word and remember saying that I had wished for a journey like that to present itself to me. He spoke of being open to the adventures that are out there for all and that it was our choice if we wanted to see them or not. So very true. When asked where he was off to next he informed me about cave people in southern Spain that he had just discovered and was on his way to see what it was all about.

Wow. His words, his stories, and his attitude were all extremely freeing and contagious. I left that boat ride ready to take what the world had in store for me. I wanted to throw caution to the wind and drink tap water! I wanted to eat bugs and sleep under the stars! I was going to let my next move be decided by fate...and then I remembered Chamonix France. I spent hours wandering around that popular French Alps ski town searching for a place to sleep all because I didn't book ahead. No vacancy signs were lit and every bed in town was seemingly full. I didn't realize it at the time but it was spring break for half of Europe. Fast-forward a few painful hours. I ended up bunking in an attic with twelve other travelers and was trying to put the nightmare of a day behind me only to be kept awake by loud snores and the stench of sweaty

clothes draped over the heater next to my pillow. Not fun. It was my own little stinky nightmare that could have been easily avoided.

In the end I said I would attribute it to an experience, one that I would learn from. Ever since that horrible misadventure I plan for the first night or two before I arrive at my destination at the very least as to never have to sleep in a sweat lodge again.

Obviously we are not all ready to live in a cave outside of Grenada. This doesn't mean you should plan every infinite detail though. I recommend a hybrid of trip planning nerd and free-spirited African hippie cyclist. Here are some of the essential details that warrant a second look when planning your trip:

**Accommodations** – Your hostel or hotel choice can make or break your stay in any city. Staying in a bad hostel or hotel can make your memories of a great place clouded with images of dirty bathrooms, rude staff, or worse; bed bugs. It pays to plan your next stop. It really does. Book ahead, especially in peak seasons, and use sites like [hostelworld.com](http://hostelworld.com) and [tripadvisor.com](http://tripadvisor.com) to get other traveler's reviews, tips, and perspectives.

**Transportation** – You can always get from point A to point B. Getting there comfortably or on time can depend on your budget or when you booked. Planning ahead can ensure your route is confirmed with fewer surprises and can potentially be cheaper. This however offers little freedom to change your plans if something comes up. For air travel only book long haul flights in advance as shorter flights are often available on no thrill airlines. For ground transportation look for rail or bus passes that let you hop on and off with little planning ahead.

**Meals**–Experiencing other cultures and their food is a huge part of traveling. Knowing what to enjoy and where can help make the most of your visit. Look ahead for tips on where to get the best gelato in Rome or the best parrilla in Buenos Aires. Hotel and hostel staff can make suggestions but be warned, some work out deals with local restaurants to drive business to them.

If the above planning is too much for you to handle I say at the very least plan your venture to start around a set event. Set some something firm. Something concrete. It will stop the excuses and start the adventure. New Years eve in New York City? Great. Book it. World Cup in Brazil? Awesome. Buy tickets. Non-refundable can help if you are really having a hard time going through with it. Be sure it is a significant event that is far enough out to give you time to prepare but not so far out that you will talk yourself out of it.

For my first backpacking walkabout it was the Winter Olympics in Torino Italy that got me moving. It wasn't until I bought that first ticket (a curling match of all events!) did I realize that this trip was actually happening. Only then did my backpacking wheels begin to move. If it weren't for that first ticket I would still be reading about dingoes and honing up on my didgeridoo skills. Not that those are necessarily bad things; I just needed a little more to get me committed. Chances are you will too. You will find getting to that point is half the battle. Beyond that your trip can take flight and be left to whatever comes your way. Adventure and opportunities will present themselves. All you will have to do is choose to see them.

# Reality Check

Putting this day dream into motion

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

— Lao Tzu

So you have passed the passive aggressive stage and committed to a life-changing adventure. You have purchased your concrete ticket and there is no going back now. The wheels are in motion. Excitement turns to panic as the reality sinks in. What do I do with my house? Where am I going to put all my stuff?? I can't quit my job!!! These are valid concerns, ones that hopefully you have addressed in one way or another already. If not, well you have some work to do.

**Your House or Home-** pending your financial situation you have options. Sell if the market is favorable for you. If you made money on the sale plan to set aside a portion of it for your next homes down payment. Arrange a low risk savings option for the chunk of change to sit in. Don't touch unless it is an absolute emergency.

If selling isn't an option, rent it out. Renting it furnished will save you on storage fees and can bring in more money. Canvas your friends and family for potential renters. Widen your search if you have no luck but make sure to find someone credible. Do your due diligence. Have a friend or hire a property management company with good communication skills to check up on your place and your renters while you are gone.

If you rent, this will be easier. If possible you should arrange your departure around your lease end date. Don't let this hold you back though. Arrange a sublet if you cannot get out of your term. Friends, family, Facebook and posting sites like Craigslist can help fill your need.

**Your Things** – Remember that they are just that. Stuff. More often than not

they are knickknacks that we hang on to without really knowing why. Let go. If you haven't backpacked before you will soon learn how little you need to be happy. The 10 outfits you packed will quickly be whittled down to 2 or 3 as you find you don't need them. In return your back will thank you. For items that you consider necessary, ask yourself if you will truly miss them and if they can be replaced when you return. Otherwise you are paying to store them. Think long and hard about storing that worn out couch. Chances are you can replace it with a cheaper or better one when you get back. Sever the emotional ties to material things. Sell what you can, donate the rest.

**Your Relationship's** - Hopefully you are in a relationship with someone who is going with you or someone that is understanding and gets why you are traveling. Anything out of this range can be tough to deal with. If traveling is your dream and you are being held back ask yourself what is more important to you. Help them understand but be sure to understand yourself first. Otherwise you will be arguing with no outcome. Ask yourself if it is a relationship worth fighting for. Are you truly happy or just comfortable? Expect fights and heartbreak.

If you truly feel in your heart that the relationship is salvageable, make it work. I'm not saying it will be easy but it is possible. I traveled for 6 months with a friend that left his girlfriend behind and they made it work. It was hard (and tough to be around at times) but they dealt with it. It cost them a huge calling card bill but he returned to her and they are now married. It was a test on their relationship and they passed.

If you are not in a relationship or are traveling with a friend then congratulations, this got easier for you. Friendships aren't without their complications though. Remain open, positive, and understanding. The road ahead will be rocky at times.

**Your Job** - Chances are your company was around before you and will go on without you. You are making excuses if you think you are that important to your company's success. Submerging our life in our work is what we do for a sense of fulfillment or pride. For many it is a means of survival however for most it is a means to sustain the life they have been accustomed to. Adjust your means and you will be fine. If you truly are critical to your company's well being then the chips are truly in your favor. Play your cards.

You may think that there is no way your employer will let you just take off for 6 months and let you come back. Not true. If it is a job you wish to return to then speak with your human resources department about a leave without pay. A lot of company's are open to (or can be open to) the idea of personal needs leave or educational leave. Sell it as an opportunity to grow and learn. Even if you are not planning on coming back, having the door open is a nice option. Some companies even offer programs that assist with this like setting aside portions of your pay for future leave. Obviously not every company is this open but worth looking into. It will not hurt to ask and will open the dialog for eventually leaving.

Working remotely could be an option as well. It is becoming a bigger reality for many as day-to-day tasks move more and more online. I recommend reading *The 4 Hour Work Week* by Timothy Ferris. This short read dives into workplace productivity and sets out a plan to move your day-to-day life to automation and working remotely.

Maybe you are not thrilled with your job in the first place and are looking for change. Just like your relationships you need to ask if you are truly happy with your employment or if you are just comfortable. If you are like most people, you are stuck somewhere you didn't necessarily see yourself being stuck at. Your job is simply a means to keep you in the life you have become accustomed too. If you are unhappy, move on. Taking the time to travel will provide a meaningful exit from your daily hell and can open a door to something much better. Being away will force change. Use the time to re-evaluate what you want to do. Do the research. If you are looking at a career change look into



taking courses online, or classes abroad. Doesn't doing these things from a beach in Thailand sound better than daydreaming about them from your office cubicle?

**Money** – This is a big one. The next subchapter is dedicated to this.

**Tying up Loose Ends** - Chances are before you leave you will be busy. Between picking up last-minute items and saying your goodbyes to friends and family you will have little time to breath. It may feel taxing and it may take its toll. Just remind yourself why you are doing this trip and what lies ahead. Here is a short list of tasks that may get lost in the shuffle:

- *Bills* - automate ones you can't cancel. Change to online statements.
- *Other Mail* – Cancel your subscription or move online. Have mail forwarded or setup a hold on your address.
- *Travel Insurance* - ensure you have adequate coverage for your duration away. Shop around.
- *Vaccines and Prescriptions*– Check online for current outbreaks and what you need to prepare if you are visiting affected areas. Consult your doctor for any ongoing prescriptions.
- *Passports and Visa's* – make sure all are valid and in place.

# Financial Check

It's cheaper than you think

Time is more valuable than money. You can get more money, but you cannot get more time.

—Jim Rohn

I was very lucky growing up. My family was not necessarily well off, more so living comfortably in the middle class. Where we were rich was in our values. I owe my financial outlook to my mother who placed monetary worth in experience over materialistic items. This helped give me a greater outlook on life. This did however come as a blessing and a curse. While on vacations as a child she would often splurge and spoil us with tickets to sporting events or fancy diners. The justification was always the same, "When are we going to be back here? Might as well make the most of it." These became words to live and die by. Instead of impulse purchases I have saved for trips and have made the absolute most of them. I have become wealthy with experience and overall good times. These events and moments have become priceless to me.

This is a mentality that is not shared by most. Too often we spend our hard-earned dollars on possessions that will give us little satisfaction other than bragging rights. Keeping up with the latest trends is costly and can tie your money up in fads that you will soon outgrow. If you are serious about traveling around the world you need to change your outlook on expenses and redefine what it means to you to be "rich."

If you have the financial means to travel, then travel. Having adequate funds is a big factor to overcome and if that is in place then you are really just making excuses not to go. If you are like most people you won't have the immediate money to travel. This should not deter you. Think of it as a challenge with an amazing reward at the end. If you are a student looking for a break in your studies you can defer your loans or spend a year working or studying abroad. If you have debt start taking the right steps to clear it or look at consolidating

it to obtain a workable monthly interest payment that you can manage while away.

Obviously everyone's financial situation is different. The one common thing is that there is potential to save for all if you really want to. You just have to be committed to the idea of backpacking. Once that is in place you can start making the necessary adjustments to make your dream a reality.

Setting a budget for your trip is a good way to determine how much money you need to save. Look at the countries you are considering traveling to and find out an average daily allowance for each. Searching the Internet will reveal several sites to assist with this. Select your accommodation preference type (couch surfing, hostel, hotel, etc..) and meal expense type to obtain your estimated daily budget for that particular country. Sites like [www.budgetyourtrip.com](http://www.budgetyourtrip.com) will factor in things like local transportation, entertainment, and communication when breaking down the daily budget. Start a spreadsheet and populate it with everywhere you anticipate and want to go. You will quickly notice that time spent in places like Western Europe and North America will cost a lot more than Asia, and Central America. Going beyond your budget in the more expensive places will be balanced out by the cheaper places, pending the duration spent in each.

For examples sake let's say you come up with an average of \$50/day for your daily budget. This works out to \$9,125 for 6 months of backpacking around the world. Most people will say that there is no way that I can save that kind of money to travel. Really? No way? I'm not saying it will be easy for most, but I am saying it is achievable. You may have to sacrifice certain things but it is achievable. Think about these cutbacks and savings tips:

**Entertainment** – Let's say you go out with friends an average of 2 nights per week for diner and/or drinks. Let's say you spend an average of \$40 per outing, which for many is a very low estimate. That comes to **\$4,160** a year. I'm not saying you need to go into complete hibernation but you seriously need to consider your choices. Again, it may not be easy for everyone. Think

about this, one \$40 night out at the pub can feed you for over 10 days in places like Vietnam and Nicaragua.

Entertainment savings can also be found at home. Discontinuing your TV cable can save you **\$720** a year your bill is \$60 a month, which again is conservative. Most shows these days can be found online for free or cheap, which can ease the transition if this seems drastic. Utilize your new free time to learn and grow. Read, study, or plan your upcoming adventure. You will be amazed at the amount of time wasted watching television.

Just from those two short-term entertainment sacrifices over half of the total 6 month travel budget has been accounted for. For deeper savings try cutting back on these other potential entertainment expenses:

- Concerts/Sporting events
- Weekend trips
- Movie theaters
- Cut out specialty coffee. \$5/day adds up.
- Sell off your music and movie collection. They take up space and can be replaced.

These may seem like minor savings but note that every dollar saved is potentially extra time away.

**Cellular Phone** – The world has become cell phone dependent. I am not saying to ditch your cell phone, especially if you have no other means of communication. I am saying consider downgrading your plan or moving to a pay as you go option. With the wide availability of free wireless Internet consider cutting your data plan. Sure you won't be able to look up show times for your nearest movie theater but you won't be missing that luxury if you are cutting back on theaters anyway. With a national US average of around \$50/month, there are savings to be had.

**Transportation** – If you live in North America you may think that having a vehicle is a necessity but is it really? It is really more of an inconvenience not to have a car more than anything and with the rising cost of gas you stand to

save plenty. Selling your vehicle can save you big time with fuel, insurance, maintenance, and parking costs a thing of the past. Bike, walk, and utilize public transportation or car pool with co-workers. Most major cities now offer car-sharing programs that work great. If going car free is a complete no go for you try cutting back. Only drive during the week or on weekends. The savings will amaze you.

**Living Arrangements**– Consider downsizing or taking in a roommate if your place is big enough. Pending where you live the extra rent money will vary greatly but will be extra cash for short-term inconvenience. The potential is also there for your new roommate to take over your lease or rent your place in its entirety once you leave.

Between cutting back on transportation costs and taking in a roommate you can easily make up the remaining half of your 6-month travel budget and then some. You can see how this is very feasible. These are just a few examples that can go a long way if you let them. Just think short-term inconveniences for long-term achievements. Also, saving over a year is just an example. You can monetize it over a period based on your comfort level but consider this, the more you sacrifice now the more you save and the faster you can leave. Stretching it out too far can make it seem less achievable and thus harder to stay on track.

The point is save where you can. It may not seem like much but it all adds up and it is all savings. One sure thing, if you don't start saving now you will just be putting it off that much longer. Beyond saving you can also take a second job to earn extra money or sell off your possessions.

Of course the savings don't have to stop once you reach your goal and are off on your adventure. Staying on budget doesn't have to be restricted to the pre trip planning. To maximize backpacking distance and duration you can save while away as well.

**Accommodations** –Hostels are a cheap accommodation options and a great way to meet fellow backpackers. With competition high in well-traveled areas it is easy to find very comfortable options. Check out [hostelworld.com](http://hostelworld.com) for property reviews and bookings. For even deeper savings try couch surfing. Once reserved for college friends, this term has taken on a broader meaning with the popularity of the website [www.couchsurfing.org](http://www.couchsurfing.org) This site sets up world travelers with hosts that offer up anything from local tips, transportation, personal guide, to a free place to rest your head. Aside from being cheap it also offers visitors the chance to experience how locals live across the globe.

**Meals** – Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to starve while backpacking around the globe. You can eat quite well and cheaply by hitting local markets for prepared meals or picking up ingredients to cook for yourself at your hostel. Street food in Asia can be very good and extremely cheap. Also look for your regions snack food of choice. In Central and South America Empanadas are readily available, cheap, filling, and delicious. In Japan it is tasty stuffed seaweed snacks called *onigiri*. In Iceland it is hot dogs covered in crispy onions. Point is every country has there's and they are tasty. Avoid eating at restaurants when possible, as they are your most expensive dinning options.

**Transportation** –Sticking to land travel may be the cheapest option but have a look at local airlines before you take that 16-hour bus ride or overnight ferry. Sometimes an hour flight can be only slightly more when factoring the time difference.

**Entertainment** –Consider the following cheap and free entertainment options if on a tight budget:

- Walking tours
- Most cities offer discounts with multiple attraction passes
- Many museums are free to visit on certain days of the week or month.
- Enjoy the outdoors, parks, beaches – read a book, relax, or enjoy a sunset

- Peruse local markets. It's a great place to find a cheap meal or supplies for a picnic or your next travel day.
- Buy alcohol from grocery and liquor stores opposed to drinking at clubs and bars.

You can also look at working your way across the globe. Teaching English as a second language is a popular option for those looking to make money abroad. Most agencies will cover your accommodations while on contract and pay enough to let you save up for your next stop. I have also met others that have simply put up flyers in coffee shops and gone that route successfully. Working in pubs, restaurants, and hostels are also common options for working abroad. Be sure to look into work permits and visa requirements prior to departing on your backpacking trip.

If you are on a strict budget consider maintaining your travel spreadsheet by entering daily or weekly expenditures as you go. This will help you stay on budget and avoid potential problems down the line. More money can equal more time and farther distances.

The important thing to note is you need to get over saying that travel is too expensive. It is clearly not if you are committed. Set your budget and start saving. Stop putting it off. The longer you wait the farther away it will be. With a few adjustments here and there you will soon find that saving the funds is not as far-fetched as you think. Once away and spending wisely you will also notice that it really is cheaper than you think.

# Achieve.

(Making the absolute most out of a  
fantastic situation)



# Open Your Eyes

Accept what is coming

“A mind is like a parachute. It doesn't work if it is not open.”

— Frank Zappa

I was once a very closed off person. I would get comfortable with routine and those closest to me and didn't often expand beyond that. I had been aware of this bad habit for years and hated myself for it. I would make up excuses not to go out with friends, I would find reasons not to try new things, and I stayed in more than I would like to admit. Traveling was my opportunity to squash these traits. I was ready to come out of my shell, meet new people and a new me. For the first 3 months of my very first extended backpacking trip I traveled with a friend. This made it easier to commit to the trip and it offered company however at times it led me back to my old self. I found myself shutting out others and only being concerned with what my friend and my next steps were. This drastically changed when I left my friend in Greece to backpack on my own. My only itinerary for the following 3 months was to visit a friend in Norway. From there I was going to leave my route to chance. This was an incredibly liberating and free few months of my life and has defined me as the person I am today. I visited Latvia, a place I never would have imagined going to, and ran into a college friend that I had lost touch with. It was as random as my life was at that moment. I searched for the Loch Ness monster in Inverness and slept on an airport bench in Glasgow. I listened to Swedish jazz-fusion in Stockholm and Eurovision 2006 winner “Lordi” with 100,000 others on the streets of Helsinki. Everywhere I went I was open and welcoming to what was available to me. I met so many great people, some that I am still in contact with to this day. I met an Aussie couple in Poland that I would later meet up with again in Croatia. I partied with Russians, Brits, Americans, Austrians, and the Irish. Most notably, I met the love of my life on a train from Krakow to Budapest. Someone that I have been fortunate enough to share a thousand travel memories with since. Over those few months I

laughed, I loved, and I lived more than I had done in my 25 years of existence. All because I was open to what was in front of me all along.

The adventure you are heading out on is a great time to face your fears or come out of your shell. Be open to new experiences, opportunities, and people you meet along the way. A good way to succeed at this is to say yes more. It is a very liberating word and can lead to wonderful things if you let it. It is also a way to break old habits. Perhaps the old you would say no to a night out with friends or to going away for the weekend. Maybe you had reasons like saving for this trip. Maybe you didn't. Maybe you were in a funk that kept you down and unsociable. Well the old you is just that and that person was left at home. The new you says yes to a night out with friends. The new you says yes to adventure. The new you says yes to the unknown. When you are traveling and say no to something, think about what you are actually saying yes to. Yes to staying the same. Yes to inexperience. Yes to the mundane. Aren't these all things you left behind?

**Say Yes to Adventure** – Maybe you are not adventurous by nature and have always resented that. Maybe you have turned down opportunities in the past to try things like downhill skiing, hang gliding, or bungee jumping. Maybe you had no real reason to say no other than fear. On your trip you will be given plenty of opportunities to conquer your fears. You will have a choice whether or not to accept your old self or move on. Saying yes to these opportunities can provide a thrill that maybe you didn't know existed. It is also saying yes to meeting other people in your same situation. Those other people can lead to other great experiences if you let them.

**Say Yes to People** – Many of us have barriers up for people we do not know. We have become numb to our surroundings and often shut out those around us. Backpacking around the world will present people from all walks of life that will want in. Fellow travelers can offer up tips and stories that are invaluable when deciding where to go next. Some can offer companionship or a drinking partner. Some people will see you as a handout, which can ruin

your interactions with others. The key here is *some* will see you that way, not all. Listen to what people have to say before judging them. Not all are looking for money. For those that are, maybe you are in a situation to help or volunteer your time. Be open to that idea.

**Say Yes to Impulses** – Maybe you are not the most spontaneous person in the world. Your friends call you “Steady Eddy” as you never throw caution to the wind. When approached with something random and fun you come up with a boring or lame excuses not to do it. This is no way to live and you know it. Backpacking will present many chances to be spontaneous and can lead to feeling incredibly free if you allow it. Saying yes to spontaneity is saying yes to fun. Say yes to fun.

**Say Yes to Culture**– Maybe you are a fussy eater or have an inexperienced pallet. Be prepared to open up your taste buds to the new and wonderful. Admittedly it is nice once and awhile to go with what you know. It’s easy to walk into a McDonalds in Tokyo and order a Big Mac. You know what you are getting and your order will be understood but where is the fun in that? Where is the adventure? You have been given an amazing opportunity to grow. Don’t waste your calories on meals you can have back home. Experience local delicacies. Not all will be to your tastes but guaranteed you will be surprised at what you find and what you like. Learn to appreciate fresh and locally sourced ingredients and how they are prepared around the world.

Bottom line is ensuring you are open to what the world has to offer. Not all travel experiences happen by osmosis. You have to accept them and allow for change. If so you will be given experiences that will last a lifetime. They will come home with you. They will help you grow. They will inspire others. When I find myself shutting out life around me now I remind myself of how great life was while I was backpacking. I remember what saying yes has given me and how in return saying yes now can give back.

Remember to be open. Accept what is coming.

# Attitude Check

Not all days are Facebook worthy

“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.”

– Winston Churchill

It's truly amazing how someone who is stressed to the point of exhaustion and saddened to the point of tears can be at peace the moment it is all left behind. For me it was the first flight of my journey. I had just left a home that required some work to get the point of being able to leave, my job of 5 years, and a girlfriend of 3. As the plane lifted off I could feel the pressure, the worries, and the heartbreak just escape my body. The stress of tying up loose ends with my house and the pain of a broken relationship seemed to float away. I was at peace for the first time in what seemed like years. I felt light and happy. I took a deep breath and exhaled a sigh of relief and thought to myself “of course I feel better, what's the point in worrying? I can't do anything about it now.” That thought spawned a smile across my face that has not quit to this day. It was the beginning of something great.

Be warned though, the road ahead will not all be smiles and amazing times. There will be moments of sadness and regret. You will be lonely. You will miss home and those you left behind. You will think that your asshole friends, the ones were bragging about feeding baby white tigers in Bali, were full of shit. You will find that not all days are Facebook worthy. Your friends had to learn that and you will too. The key is to know that these times will pass. They are the few moments of weakness and they will fade away. They will be replaced with wonderful experiences and memories that will last a lifetime. Focus on the reality of your situation. You are living. Think about what the alternative would be for you at that moment had you not made the choice to live your life. Stuck in beachfront grass hut in Tahiti because of a torrential downpour or in your cubicle at your old job because of a torrential downpour of paper work? The rain will pass.

Perhaps your situation will be worse than a rainy day. Maybe you will lose your passport or accidentally put it through the wash. Maybe you were in the wrong place at the wrong time and got mugged. It's not the end of the world. Yes it is an inconvenience and may set you back time wise or financially but it will be a learning experience and you will move on. Don't dwell on what has happened. Always move on. You can't go back and change what has happened, you can only be prepared for what's coming. Unless you own a time machine, move on.

Instead of dwelling on what you can't change, learn to laugh at the unexpected. Learn to make the most out of a poor situation. Icelandic volcanic activity interrupted your flight plans to head north? Head south instead. This is a chance to be spontaneous and adventurous. The airline lost your luggage and now all you have are the clothes on your back? Treat yourself to a shopping spree. Chances are you will have insurance that covers this or the airline will give you cash. Slept in and missed your train out of town? Head somewhere else or spend another night in Paris, New York, Rio de Janeiro, or wherever else you may feel you are *stuck* in. Would that *really* be so bad? It's funny if you think of it that way. Wasting energy on what can't be undone is pointless. Focus on the positives and what can be learned from the experience. Having a positive attitude towards backpacking is key to making the most of your time.

If you are truly struggling with being away from friends and family then reach out to them. They are an email, phone or video call away. Chances are they will point out how silly you are being and that your time is a gift and not to be squandered. Maybe that kind of reassurance from a loved one is what you will need to move on. If that fails to get you through your funk try treating yourself. Eat a fabulous meal or upgrade your room to something more comfortable. Your trip doesn't have to always be plain noodles and dorm rooms. Splurging now and then can provide a lift in spirits and get you back on track.

And be sure to post plenty of wonderful travel pictures. Your friends won't be jealous at all.

# Reflection Check

Your world is about to change

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”

— Søren Kierkegaard

The Leaning Tower of Pisa left me gasping for air. Not from its imperfect stature or its iconic significance. My rushed experience seeing it winded me and provided a memory I will never forget. My friend that I was backpacking with had been to Pisa before and said it didn't warrant a stopover. I reluctantly agreed even though I wanted to see the city and the world-famous sight. I wanted to make up my *own* mind about it. When we found out we had a short half hour layover between changing trains in Pisa I decided I would head out and see what all the fuss was about. Looking at a map I decided it wasn't too far from the train station so off I went on a light jog to see the famous Leaning Tower. This light jog turned into a full on sprint after taking a wrong turn and heading 4 blocks in the opposite direction. When I finally arrived I was sweaty, out of breath, and in awe. I had little time to take it all in. I snapped a couple of pictures and purchased a snow globe as requested by my friend who was keeping a safe eye on my bag back at the station. I started my return jog and quickly realized I was not going to make it in time to catch the train. I ended up flagging down a cab that had someone already in it and asked, politely as I could in my sweaty and breathless state, if I could pay her fare for a ride to the station. Perhaps out of fear or lack of understanding the passenger shook her head it what I could only assume was a yes. “Good enough” I thought to myself and hopped in. I rejoined my friend as he boarded the departing train with only a couple of minutes to spare. Even though I didn't get the time I wanted to appreciate and learn about the tower, I was glad I had seen it and left with a smile on my face and incredible self-satisfaction that I pulled it off.

Looking back now I know I learned 2 things from that experience. 1) I was incredibly out of shape at the time, and 2) I can cram in as much as possible with the little time given. This has become a valued and hated trait. Friends I travel with now call me “JammyMcJamerson” as my trips now are notoriously packed with as much ground coverage as possible. The point is, positive or not, I did learn from this brief experience and I grew from it. I took away a lesson and a great memory.

There will be many moments on your journey where you may take away something completely different than what you were expecting to. It could be a funny story, an epiphany, or love. Again, not everything you take in will leave you smiling. An experience can also leave you sad, angry, or feeling alone. Good or bad, they are all points to learn from. The important thing to remember is to take away something from what you have seen or done. Otherwise you are just going through the motions.

It’s easy to get lost in the check lists of sights to see and things to do. After a couple months on the road you may find yourself rushing to check things off and head to the next destination. Slow down. Don’t lose sight of what you are seeing and don’t lose sight of why you left to travel in the first place. Don’t get me wrong, seeing famous architecture, natural scenery and world famous art can be uplifting, inspiring, and liberating. Just don’t let it become something to say you have seen, done, or been to.

Take your time.

Take it in.

Enjoy.

Reflect.

It’s important to ask yourself what you have learned along the way. Read the stories, learn the history, smell the roses. If not you are passing by what you have traveled thousands of miles to see. What is the point in that? You have sacrificed and saved to get there, what’s the rush?

...and for God sake put your cell phone down. Connect with your surroundings, not your Facebook friends and Instagram followers. There is a time and place that. You will have plenty of down time to bury your face in your electronics. Leave it there.

At various stages of your trip take time to look back at what you have done. Think about your journey and what you have accomplished. Think about what you can accomplish. Are you any closer to your dreams you had at the beginning of this trip? If not then ask yourself why? What is holding you back? Think about what you have learned about yourself, your country, your world, and your fellow man. How will you use these lessons to grow? How has your aspect on life changed?

Chances are you will head home changed for the better. You will be opened up to culture, nature, and new experiences. You will be transformed into a better person because of it. You will be eager to see more, to do more. You will inspire others to do the same. Your life and your outlook on it will never be the same and in the end, isn't that what this is all about?

Don't hold back. Dream big – Always.



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