

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

**MAKING THE MOST OUT  
OF YOUR 2 WEEKS+  
ANNUAL LEAVE**



**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:

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Shaun, it's your turn now!

Luc Foin



# TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

## Making The Most Out Of Your 2 Weeks+ Annual Leave

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# Headspace.

(Setting yourself straight)

# The Harsh Truth

Living with restrictions

“By working faithfully eight hours a day you may eventually get to be boss and work twelve hours a day.”

—Robert Frost

We live in a backwards world. We really do. We kill ourselves working so we can live. It is an ironic theme that is overlooked by most but accepted by almost all. So much effort goes into sustaining our lives and the comfort level we become accustomed to that we are blind to the fact that we are living to work and thus barely *living* at all. We are spending the majority of our adult lives - and all of our statistically healthiest years, stuck behind a desk, in a cubicle, or at an office. This isn't including the ridiculous amount of time we spend commuting to and from said desk, cubicle, or office. Years are literally wasted sitting in traffic, on a bus, or jammed in a subway car.

We get stuck because we place emphasis on material possessions and fat bank accounts more so than family, friends, and our overall wellbeing. We work ourselves to death because that is that's what's expected of us and we don't know any better. Can you blame us? We are setup for this life from our beginnings. We grow up with imagery of every product imaginable shoved down our throats. We are told to buy this and buy that. Most of us grow up doing just that. We go to college or university and rack up exuberant debt from tuition fees. We struggle to get a foothold in the unstable job markets and once we do we are driven by fear to never let go. We are often heard saying, “I can't afford to lose my house/car/etc...” Because of this we accept what value has been placed on our skills or contributions. We then put in the time. We climb the corporate ladder in an effort to make more money or to gain more vacation days only to find that it requires more of your hours in the office. Extra cash ends up going to a more comfortable life, which becomes



reliant on the extra money we make. Not matter your pay scale we can all get stuck in this cycle.

So we spend half our life working hard and putting in the time so we can live comfortably, support our families, and ourselves. We save what we can for retirement because that is when we have the time to do what we really want. Sadly though, by the time that rolls around we can be hindered by health issues, sagging energy levels, and a desire to do less than what our 20 something self would have done. Many do take their retirement years to live. They tour the world, move to warmer climates, and enjoy a laid back existence. This is the many, not most. Most have little saved to do much more than live out their days in the life they have built for themselves.

This harsh realization comes with a silver lining - our annual leave. The days that are given to us by our employer so we can spend our time doing what we please. The allotment of time set aside each year to leave work behind and enjoy life. Pending where you live you are restricted in your annual vacation days but guaranteed time off by your government. The one exception to this is The United States of America, which guarantees its hard-working citizens a grand total of zero days a year. Canada, their neighbors to the north, offers its citizens two weeks paid leave starting and increments at varying levels. This still pales in comparison to other developed countries in the world that offers between four and five weeks paid leave a year.

Regardless of whether you live in France (5 weeks a year paid leave) or Japan (2 weeks a year paid leave) the mentality needs to be the same; make the absolute most of the time you have been given. Live your life during those days. Time is precious and you need to be aware of how little you actually have to actually *live* it.

# ExpectMore

Defining your Wow Moment

“Sometimes it's the same moments that take your breath away that breathe purpose and love back into your life.”

— Steve Maraboli

For many a vacation means a relaxing visit to a warm destination. Maybe this is a Caribbean cruise or a carefree all-inclusive resort where days are highlighted by buffets and drinks with tiny umbrellas in them. Granted one can return from a getaway like this feeling refreshed and rejuvenated...but for how long? Inevitably the laid-back trip washes away. Maybe not at first, but it will return. Perhaps once buried under the endless paperwork that stacked up while you were gone. Maybe it is a flickering fluorescent office light bulb or being stuck in a traffic jam that sets it off. Point is stress will make its way back into your life. It will erase the short-term memories of your poolside cabana and cold drinks. It will wipe out visions of a swim up bar and hot tub soaks. In the end it will leave you saying “man I need a vacation” even though you just had one.

Doesn't this seem incredibly counter productive? Wouldn't you want to get more out of your vacation time than easily replaceable memories? Wouldn't you rather spend your precious free time on something more memorable? Something fulfilling? Something that will leave your jaw dropped, your eyes opened, and your heart full? Yes a mindless break from work is a necessity now and then but wouldn't you feel better coming home with greater knowledge or appreciation of yourself and the world you live in? Wouldn't you rather grow in a way that doesn't include your waistline? Perhaps as a brother or sister? As mother or father? As friend or humanitarian? Wouldn't it be great to feel alive?

The obvious answer is yes to any or all of the above. Who wouldn't want such fulfilling moments in their life? One will certainly ask how to achieve such enlightenment and will instinctively think that it is something that is only reachable by those with endless cash flow and free time. False. I am here to tell that it is easier than you think and is within reach for everyone. How you ask? The short answer is wow. Three letters strung together that are uplifting, freeing, and exciting when a special moment causing them to organically leave your mouth. Even when used out of context and on its own it can be moving. Try it now. Soft and slow, say it out loud and see how it makes you feel. Go ahead, I can wait.

*Wow.*

Right? For those in the proper mindset that tiny word spoken out loud should have left you feeling lighter and happier. Maybe a hint of a smile broke out across your face. Maybe some tension has been released from your shoulders. Maybe you are feeling less stress. Whatever your results, try to imagine what a "Wow Moment" would bring you when achieved naturally.

What is a **Wow Moment** exactly? It can mean something different for everyone but can have the same effects.

- You will feel rewarded.
- You will feel alive.
- You will feel love.
- You will feel at peace.
- You will remember the moment for the rest of your life.

A **Wow Moment** is a reward for the effort you put in. This could be a rewarding view after a grueling hike through a rain forest or to the top of a volcano. It could be the temples of Angkor Wat at sunrise or a sunset that will never come to fruition on the arctic tundra. It's a moment that makes you feel purpose. It makes you realize that all your hard work that you put in to get to that point in life is not lost. This effort can stretch from how you got to that point on your trip, how you got to where you are with your job or schooling,

and how you got to that point with loved ones. It can be peaceful. It can be chaotic. It can last hours, or seconds. It is the reason you live, or at least it should be. It is something that connects with your surroundings. This could be between you and nature, your loved ones, or yourself. You will be in touch with that moment and it will live on in memory for the rest of your days.

This may sound generic and all encompassing but know this, when you achieve this moment you will understand. The words will effortlessly escape your body. You will say “wow” and you will know you have arrived.

# Find More

Defining your “Ends of the Earth”

“Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore.”

— André Gide

How does one achieve a moment that warrants saying “wow?” Obviously this can vary for everyone. For most it is an experience or sight of something new, something wonderful. Think about your fondest memories from when you were a child. Aren’t all of your good memories a result of experiencing something new and exciting? Maybe it was from the sight of a new toy on Christmas morning. Maybe it was seeing a beach for the first time. Maybe it was Disney World or the Grand Canyon that left you completely speechless or too excited to shut up. It could also have been a lesson learned or valued experience. Maybe it was the first song you learned to play on the guitar or piano. Maybe it was riding your bicycle sans training wheels for the first time. It could have been an experience of love or friendship. Your first kiss, awkward or not, is a memory you will always have. Perhaps it was the first time you met your baby brother or sister. That moment was definitely a new sight for your parents and left them saying “wow.” The point here is it is the new and the exciting that is most memorable for us. It is the happy experiences we have that stick with us and define us as we grow. It was the exploration of what the world had for us that was making us say “wow,” and it had us searching for more.

As we got older our world started expanding and our limits were pushed further and further out. The new and the exciting became less and less frequent and were replaced with the mundane and routine. The risks involved with reaching out were outweighed by the comforts of what has become familiar. As a result learning became less important and growth as a human

seemed to slow down or halt completely. If any of this sounds familiar you need to ask yourself, “When did it become OK to stop exploring?”

For most it is the comfort of ones personal bubble that keeps us from going beyond its limits. All of what we know of our current day-to-day routine is in our bubble. Our jobs, our friends, and our social activities that we immerse ourselves in are all within our bubble. We have order in the bubble. We have familiarity. We have safety. Even the city or town we live in is encompassed - or at least the areas we frequent. If you live in a large city think of the opposite end of town. When was the last time you visited that side? It’s understandable if it has been awhile. Chances are your favorite restaurant, coffee shop, or friends are not located in that area. Obviously this can be equated to geographical reasons but what if there is a better restaurant or coffee shop at the opposite end of town? Would you go? How about if your closest friend moved there? Would you visit? Chances are you would and in the process you would be opened up to new experiences. Maybe you find that amazing restaurant. Maybe it turns out to be terrible. The point is, good or bad, it would take you outside of your bubble and you would grow because of it.

You can see how going outside of the comforts of what you know can bring change. The previous example about the city you live in demonstrates that the new and potentially exciting is out there. You just need to push your limits. Sometimes this means you need to go against the grain, against the expected, and against what you feel is normal. You need to break routine. You need to explore. To start this journey off you need to be asking, “ What is beyond my bubble?” Well if you push far enough, the ends of the Earth.

This term, “Ends of the Earth,” may seem dramatic but if you think about what is being said here, going to your very own **Ends of the Earth** location will surely bring the new and exciting back into your life. I’m not suggesting you are to become a modern day Christopher Columbus out searching for life across the Atlantic. I mean you are to become an explorer searching for your metaphorical **Ends of the Earth**. These are places that push your personal limits far beyond your personal bubble. It could be a place that is challenging to get to or a place that will take you far beyond your comfort level. This could be physically, mentally, or spiritually. It can involve risk to find it but is



outweighed by its reward. Regardless of where the **Ends of the Earth** is for you, it will be a place that you can look back from and see your life and how you got to that point. It is a place where you can reflect. It is a place where you can grow. It is a place where you can say “wow.”

How does one find such a place? Where does one begin? Well you could spend countless hours soul searching trying to figure out what the **Ends of the Earth** means to you, or you could fill a backpack and head out into the unknown. It can be that easy. A backpacking adventure can set you off on a path to find your **Ends of the Earth** and so much more. It can bring you culture, companionship, and love. It can help you move on from something, find the truth, or see the light. It will have you exploring the new and the wonderful again. It will make you feel young at heart and alive. If you allow it, your personal bubble will expand ten fold. Best of all, a backpacking trip can bring you all these wonderful things in as little as 2 weeks.

# Prepare.

(Planning your adventure)

# Misconceptions

Ignoring the stereotypes

“The more I see, the less I know for sure.”

— John Lennon

There are a lot of misconceptions when it comes to the idea of backpacking, even more so with one that is a few weeks in duration. Most conjure up myths as a way of putting off what is uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and what is perceived as hard. It's important to note that these are just excuses put in place to keep you from going, and in return, keep you from growing. Here are a few myths that can be shot down:

**Myth 1) Backpacking is for college kids and hippies** – This is a common one. Yes the world of backpacking is dominated by students taking a break from studying, the free spirited, and nomads. This is the most but certainly not the many. Many backpackers are just like you. They are looking for their own **Ends of the Earth**. They are looking for their **Wow Moment**. This includes people of all ages proving that it is never too late (or too early) to live. Folks taking a gap year between careers or life moves, retired couples, and families that have pulled their children from school can all be found searching for a life of learning on the road. This also includes my mother. She backpacked across Australia at the age of 49. She stayed in hostels and met people of all ages along the way. She did this trip 5 years before I did my first backpacking trip. And no my mother is not a nomadic hippie...although she has threatened to stop shaving her armpits to embarrass her kids. Hmmm...

**Myth 2) Two weeks vacation is better used for the beach**–Why? All the reasons previously pointed out should set this one to rest. The memories, the lessons learned, and the **Wow Moments** achieved on a backpacking trip will all last longer than the tan achieved from lying in the sun for two weeks. Also note that backpacking can still take you to a relaxing beach if you let it.

**Myth 3) I can't see enough in two weeks to make it worthwhile**–This is totally up to you and the attitude you take with you. The intention of this trip is not to see as much of the world as possible in such a short period. It is to see as much of yourself grow as possible. If geographical distances are your concern, know that the world is smaller than you think. I have gone to London from the middle of Canada for the weekend and had a blast.

**Myth 4) It's too far/too little time**–It can be if you don't plan accordingly. Two weeks or whatever your annual leave entitles you to may not seem like much but it is how you plan your trip and the routing you take that will enable you to make the most of your time. The next subchapters cover these topics.

**Myth 5) It's too expensive** – Please. You can go as extravagant as you want or as cheap as you want. You just have to go. In life there is always decisions and this is no different. You need you put your priorities in order and finance them accordingly. Setting aside money to accomplish your own **Wow Moment** should be a goal and an achievable one at that. Look at your options and where you can afford to get to and go from there. The world is large outside your personal bubble yet within reach.

You see these myths are just excuses. They are only a few examples of the many that may try to hold you back. Stereotypes and misconceptions can put up mental roadblocks that make us feel like it's OK not to change or take a risk. They entrap us and keep us within our personal bubbles. 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 vacations, experiences, 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. Dismiss the stereotypes, clear the misconceptions, and stop making excuses.

# Choose Your Traveler

Discovering the traveler you are or dream to be

“Once we accept our limits, we go beyond them.”

–Albert Einstein

Everyone’s idea of the **Ends of the Earth** is going to be different. It has varying meanings yet in the end, it is defined to achieve the same results. Choosing your path to it depends on what type of traveler you are or possibly more importantly, the type of traveler you are inspiring to be. Take a look at the following list of types of travelers to get a sense of where you land.

**The Expeditioner**–This one may seem obvious. Isn’t exploring the whole point? Yes and no. The point is to find a place that pushes your comfort limits, provides insight and reflection, as well as risk and reward. Heading out into the unknown is a big part of it and taking it literally can provide all the elements needed to achieve that **Wow Moment**. This can be as simple as a backpacking trip through Europe to an Antarctic adventure, which in a sense is the **Ends of the Earth**. The point is to head out into your unknown and explorer.

**The Outdoor Enthusiast** – For many seeking their **Ends of the Earth** is as easy as filling a backpack and heading out into nature. Week long hiking trips can provide an escape that is hard to match. It can connect you with your surroundings as well as yourself. It can be challenging yet incredibly rewarding and offer memories that will last forever. Some of the world’s best adventures include climbing Mount Everest, hiking the Appalachian Trail in the United States, The West Coast Trail of Vancouver Island, and the incredibly popular Inca Trail in Peru.

**The Adrenaline Junkie** –For those seeking a thrill to achieve that special moment have endless options. Swim with sharks off the coast of South Africa or climb the face of Mount Roraima, in Venezuela. Taking a cycling trip from

Ho Chi Minh City to Hanoi can offer a rush, culture, and spectacular scenery. River rafting, heli-skiing, kayaking, mountain climbing, and trekking are all popular adventure travel options that can have life-changing rewards.

**The Enlightenment Seeker** – Our planet is filled with amazing art, history, and beauty. Seeking this out can provide those looking to grow from it both an adventure in getting there and a reward of the beauty on the other end. This can include admiring the massive collection of art at the Louvre to wondering how the Great Pyramids of Giza were built. It can also include those seeking spiritual enlightenment through natural beauty or visiting historic religious sites like Mecca, Jerusalem, and Borobudur.

It is important to point out that finding your **Ends of the Earth** doesn't have to include seeing the *Mona Lisa* or planting a flag on top of Mount Kilimanjaro. As previously mentioned, this place is different for everyone. One man's trek through the Amazon is another man's meditation retreat in India. One man's Rembrandt is another man's full moon beach party. If the latter of the previous examples sound more like you then try one of these paths:

**The Culture Shocker** –The **Ends of the Earth** doesn't have to specifically be somewhere physical. It can be any place that provides an experience beyond what is the normal and the mundane. For many this can be experiencing day-to-day life amongst other cultures in our world. Immersing oneself in a place that is completely foreign can be an exhilarating experience. It can offer no escape from learning and will force you to adapt and grow. This can be anything from volunteering to build homes or dig wells in Africa to couch surfing through South America.

**The Beach Bum** – This blue planet of ours is littered with spectacular beaches that can provide amazing sunsets, rejuvenation, and relaxation. While many of these beaches can be found attached to posh hotels and all-inclusive resorts, there are many more off the beaten path and potentially beyond your comfort level to get to. Focus on finding those for your **Ends of the Earth** travel. Taking the opportunity to learn a new skill while away is also a great way to achieve a **Wow Moment**. Try taking surfing lessons in places like Byron Bay, Australia, or Itacare, Brazil, or snorkel the shores off Dimakya Island in the



Philippines. These can offer a way for the Beach Bum to escape somewhere far and beyond while learning and thus growing.

**The Two Week Bender** –Maybe you are the conservative type that is just looking to let loose. Maybe you play it safe at home, don't go out much, and remain sheltered from some of the fun vices in life. Maybe you want to meet some friends and experience life bouncing around hostels in Europe or party hopping in Thailand. Experiencing Oktoberfest in Bavaria can provide an adventure unlike any other on this planet and for some, can enable a **Wow Moment** that will lead to letting loose more often. Experiencing a full moon party in Koh Phangan is another great place to come out of your shell and see life from a different perspective.

**The Retreater** –Maybe your life is already packed full of party moments or intense activities. Maybe you are highly stressed from work or are dealing with personal situations that are emotionally draining. For many, inner peace can provide the self-satisfaction that would top one thousand Koh Phangan beach parties. Each year throngs of people use their vacation time for more meaningful travel in an effort to sooth their mind, body, and soul. Destination retreats can offer the **Wow Moments** in a relaxing and self-reflecting way. Meditation retreats can be a peaceful and soul healing escape. Yoga and cleansing retreats can strengthen and heal the body. Rebalancing and healing massage retreats can aid in releasing tensions built up from the life left behind. Weather the retreater's **Ends of the Earth** is meditating in a Himalayan foothills town in India or cleansing in Costa Rica; know they are all providing an experience and a means of growth.

Regardless of the path you choose to find your very own **Ends of the Earth** know this, I have never met someone who took a leap and traveled only to regret it. Not one. So don't stress on finding the adventure, the new, the wonderful, and the **Wow Moment**. They will all find you if you let it. Choose a path and go.

# Choose Your Path

Finding your Ends of the Earth

“The path of least resistance is the path of the loser.”

– H. G. Wells

Once you have settled on the type of traveler you are, or aspiring to become, its time to figure out the route you intend to take. Depending on what your goal is and where your **Ends of the Earth** destination takes you, your route can vary widely. Regardless of the type of traveler you choose to be it is important to plan out your trip to make the absolute most of your time off. To help sort this out take a look at the list of route types below to see what category you fall into.

**See A Little** – This type of route is centered on a home base in which you can branch out from. This would be a place that you could fly in and out from while taking day trips during your stay there. This type of route is aimed at the “Retreater” who will spend the majority of their time meditating in a temple or practicing yoga at a resort; or at the “Beach Bum” who is making a grass hut on a Costa Rica beach their home for two weeks. This route can also include the “Culture Shocker” who is focused on one area in an effort to absorb as much of the their surroundings as possible. This route is also a good choice for the “Adrenaline Junkie” that is looking to conquer a specific mountain or venture out on day trips like scuba diving and heli-skiing.

**See A Lot** – To make the most out of your time away consider a route that takes you from point A to point B...via points F, U, N. This could mean starting off from one city or country and returning home from another. What you do in between is the adventure. This type of route is for the “Expeditioner” who is backpacking across Europe, Asia or South America. This route is also an option for the “Adrenaline Junkie” biking from one city to another or the “Two Week Bender” that is party hopping their way across a continent. It is also a good choice for those “Enlightenment Seekers” that are looking to cover as

many historical sites, art galleries, or museums as possible during their allotted time away.

**Into The Wild** –This route is for nature lovers that are looking to connect with their surrounding and stay self-sustained. This route is for the “Outdoor Enthusiast” who is hiking with everything required to eat, sleep, and live on their backs. This is also an option for the “Adrenaline Junkies” looking to climb a mountain that will take them days to reach the summit.

Of course you don’t have to take a beaten path to your **Ends of the Earth**. Being a trailblazer and beating your own path can be half the adventure. You can always leave your route and path to chance, feel, and emotion. This is for the free-spirited that are ready to take on whatever the world throws at them. This type of travel is more suited for trips longer in length however that is not to say it can’t be done and done successfully in two weeks.

# Formulate

Mind. Body. Soul.

“He who is best prepared can best serve his moment of inspiration.”

– Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Preparing oneself for an **Ends of the Earth** adventure can be crucial for success. Achieving that **Wow Moment** could be difficult if you are not in the right headspace or physically up to the task at hand. Note the following when preparing your mind, body, and soul for your 2-week adventure:

**Physically**– This is for the “Adrenaline Junkies” that are about to take on activities like surfing massive waves on the north end of Oahu or about to climb a rock face that dwarfs your cities tallest building. Preparing your body for such an endeavor takes hard work, dedication, and a clear understanding of what is going to be asked of you. Without preparing you are preparing to fail. Stay safe and train accordingly. Speak with others that have gone the same or similar route to try to better understand the time and effort needed to conquer the upcoming challenge. This rings true to the “Outdoor Enthusiast” who is about to hike the Santa Cruz Trek in Peru or the week long Fitz Roy Trek in Patagonia. Do the research, train hard, and understand what you are getting into. If you find that you are worrying about the undertaking and work ahead then focus on the reward and satisfaction you will be presented with at the end of the journey. No pain, no gain will never ring truer.

**Emotionally** – Remember that you will be pushing your limits no matter the type of path you have chosen. You will be beyond your comfort level and outside of your personal bubble. At times you will find the journey hard and emotionally taxing. You just need to remind yourself that it is normal to feel that way and that it is expected. Learn to make the most out of every situation and use your experiences, good or bad, as an opportunity to learn and grow. This is for all types of travelers, especially those that are completely immersing themselves in another culture or those on a physically taxing

adventure that requires a strong will and determination to achieve the desired results. Stay strong.

**Spiritually** – In some instances one needs to prepare spiritually. Being in the right space spiritually and feeling connected with your surroundings can help make the most out of any adventure. Being open and inviting will lead to your **Wow Moment**. It can also help you appreciate the circumstances that have brought you to the **Ends of the Earth**. “Retreaters” and “Enlightenment Seekers” need to prepare themselves spiritually for their adventures. This is to make sure that the most is given and taken away from the path and journey they have embarked on. This could be through meditation, attending their respective church, or volunteering.

Make no mistake; I am not being hypocritical by telling you to prepare for the new, the unknown, and the unexpected. How can one prepare for that? I am telling you to prepare so the new, the unknown, and the unexpected is experienced as best as it can. I am telling you to prepare your mind, body, and soul to accept what is coming.

# Grow.

(A two week connection)



# Breathe

Connecting with your surroundings

“The purpose of life is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience.”

— Eleanor Roosevelt

Even though you may feel like you are pressed for time, don't rush the experience. Allow things to fall into place. Take your time and take it in. Look throughout. Breathe. If not you could be missing out on what is happening around you. Connect with your surroundings. If you don't take the time to do so you could be missing out on the very moments you set out to achieve. Connecting with your surroundings can mean something different to everyone. Depending on the type of traveler you choose to be it could mean anything from the people you are traveling with to the food you are eating.

For the “Outdoor Enthusiasts,” connecting with your surroundings means taking the time to connect with the natural beauty that is around you. Depending on your **Ends of the Earth** this could mean a view from the top of a mountain, the calm of a clear blue glacial lake, or the massive undergrowth of a tropical rain forest. Take the time to enjoy the view. Feel alive by dipping your toes in the frigid water. Inhale the moment by breathing in the moist dew filled air.

Connecting with your surroundings for an “Adrenaline Junkie” means connecting with the moment. In this case, enjoy the rush. Appreciate the surge that the experience is providing you. Instead of tensing up or closing your eyes while zip lining high above a rain forest in Costa Rica, relax and take it all in. Instead of gasping for air while bungee jumping in New Zealand, breathe. Open your eyes to the view, to the energy, and to the moment. They are often fast and can pass by with the blink of an eye. This rings true for the “Two

Week Bender” as well. Connecting with the moment means appreciating life. Let loose and enjoy the ride.

For the “Expeditioner” and the “Enlightenment Seeker” connecting with your surroundings can mean an understanding of what is in front of you. They are the reasons that you have been on your journey. Take the time to learn, to listen, and to appreciate. This can be at a historical monument or at the site of a scientific discovery of monumental proportions. It can range from observing giant tortoises in the Galápagos Islands to understanding the horrors that the inmates of Auschwitz went through. Taking the time to connect is taking the time to grow.

Connecting with your surroundings means just that for the “Culture Shocker.” You have dived head first into a foreign lifestyle and it’s time to embrace it. Connect with the people around you. Communicate. Listen. Love. Enjoy the art of *their* lives. Appreciate. Learn. Dance. Enjoy the food and drink. Feast. Refresh. These connections are priceless and can teach you so much about the world we all live in.

The “retreater” connects with the surrounding spirit. This could be religious or non-religious. Either way it means being open and accepting to the ideas and love around you. This is the main theme for people on retreats so accepting it makes the process that much easier and that much more enjoyable.

No matter the type of traveler you are it is important to note that without being accepting and open, making that connection with your specific surroundings is not possible. Open up. Be available. Enjoy the experience to its fullest. Connect with your surroundings.

# Wow

Connecting with that moment

“Forever is composed of nows.”

— Emily Dickinson

You have put in the hard work. You have gone beyond your personal bubble and into the unknown. You are an explorer again and it feels great. It's time to be rewarded.

It's important to remain open to what is coming to you. Accept new experiences and opportunities that come up along the way. A good way to achieve this by saying yes to things your old self would have easily said no to. When you are traveling and say no to something, think about what you are actually saying yes to. Yes to remaining the same. Yes to inexperience. Yes to the bland, unexciting, and mundane. Aren't these all things you vowed to leave behind?

Be open to adventure.

Be open to people.

Be open to impulses.

Remaining adventurous on your journey is critical in reaching your **Wow Moment**. For every type of traveler, being adventurous means something different. For the “Outdoor Enthusiast” and the “Adrenaline Junkie” it means staying on path. Remaining positive and pushing on. For the “Expeditioner” it means continuing into the unknown and accepting the challenges to reach your goal or destination. For the “Culture Shocker” it means being open to trying new things. This could be as simple as the traditional food you are surrounded by or as difficult as breaking the language barrier that stands in your way. For the “Beach Bum” it means trying new activities like surfing or diving. For the “Retreater” it means opening up spiritually and allowing others in.

Remaining open to people on your path is also critical in achieving your **Wow Moment**. If you are traveling with a spouse or partner it may seem easy to ignore those you meet along your way. Shutting down to those around you can be the same as closing the door to your very own **Ends of the Earth**. Your trip will present people from all walks of life that will want in. For the “Expeditioner” fellow explorers can offer up tips and stories that are invaluable when deciding where to go when you find yourself at a fork in the road. For the “Two Week bender” this can mean companionship or a drinking partner. For the “Culture Shocker” and the “Enlightenment Seeker” it means opening up to those that can teach you so much about life outside your bubble. It means asking strangers for help and helping out those in need. Shutting out those people can set you up for failure. Saying no to someone who is going to take you down a path of change can be saying no to your **Ends of the Earth**.

Being impulsive is potentially how you ended up on this path in the first place. Why stop now? Remaining impulsive keeps you open to the new and the exciting. It will set you on a path of change and growth that would be avoided if you had said no to it impulses. Sometimes saying yes to what feels good or what feels right is the way to your **Ends of the Earth** and your **Wow Moment**.

It is important to point out that being open and accepting is not always going to bring you happy experiences. Your path ahead will not always be lined with smiles and good times. There may be moments of sadness and regret. You may find yourself lonely and missing home. The key is to know that these moments will pass. They are minor moments of weakness and they will dissolve. Know that they will be forgotten by the wonderful experiences and memories in store for you. Remain positive. Remain Open. Focus on the reality of your situation. You are living. The moment will pass.

The point here is ensuring you are open to what the world has to offer you. Not all travel **Wow Moments** will happen by osmosis. You have to accept them and allow them in. Be inviting. Be accepting. If so you will be given experiences that will last a lifetime. They will help you grow. They will come home with you. They will inspire others.

# Reflect

Connecting with yourself

“Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened.”

— Dr. Seuss

By this point you have pushed yourself beyond your comfort limits and beyond your personal bubble. Hopefully you have found your **Ends of the Earth** and experienced your very own **Wow Moment**. Now It's time to take in what you have learned from your experiences, how you arrived to them, and how far you have come in the process.

Know that the time given and the time taken has been a gift. It is up to you to take in what you can from it. You have connected with your surroundings, now it is time to connect with yourself. Ask what this journey has meant to you? Did you grow mentally, physically, emotionally, or spiritually? If so, how? You have worked hard to get to this point. Chances are you sacrificed and saved. You owe it to yourself to answer these questions.

Think about how you got to this point. Think about the moments on your trip where you took away something completely different from what you were expecting to. It could have been a moment of laughter, a moment of love, or a moment of joy. Again, not everything you take in will leave you feeling warm. Some of your experiences may have left you down, mad, or lonely. Happy or sad, they are all experiences to grow from. The important thing is to take away a lesson from what you have gone through. Good or bad, it is growth.

Take time to look back at how far you have come. Think about your adventure and what you have accomplished. Now think about what you can be accomplished moving forward thanks to what you have experienced. Think about what you have learned about yourself, your country, your world, and the people in it. Have your views changed? Have you been opened up to life beyond your own bubble? Chances are you have and you will be better off because of it.

You will return home changed for the better even though everything around you will seem same. Your job, your friends, and your day-to-day may have stayed untouched, but not you. You will be open to life beyond your bubble and will be transformed into a better person because of it. You have pushed your limits and grown because of it. Think about how big your personal bubble has become. Now think about what is still left beyond that bubble. You will be eager to see more, to do more, and you will inspire others pursue the same. Your outlook on life will be altered and you will want to explorer again. Be that explorer. Find your next **Ends of the Earth**.

...And don't forget to say "wow."