

Travel for a Change

I enjoy a good “fly and flop” as much as anybody, but it doesn’t take long before I start to fidget. I want to go places. Meet people. Do things. I blame my parents.

When I was 12, they took me and my brothers to the Dominican Republic. I know we stayed at a resort with a fancy pool, but we didn’t spend much time there. Instead, every morning we’d wait at the side of a dusty road, flag down a decrepit bus (standing-room only due to the jumble of people, chickens and, once, a pig, on board) and set off to explore a different part of the country. Ever since, my favorite adventures have been those that involve a quest for uncharted experiences — and I’ve always felt that I return home slightly more evolved than when I left.

And yet I recently read an essay in *The New Yorker* that was dismissive of travel, and of the impact it can have. The author argues that travel is nothing more than a change of scenery. We leave. We come home. We are unchanged — and we are deluding ourselves if we think otherwise. “Travel is a boomerang,” she writes. “It drops you right where you started.”

What a sad way of seeing how we move through the world! Instead, I believe we are inevitably shaped by our environment *and* our experiences — especially when those experiences disrupt the safe ordinariness of our everyday routines.

One country that changed how I see both the world and my place in it is Jordan. I’ve visited twice, once to cover the Syrian refugee crisis for a national newspaper and again as a guest with a luxury tour company founded on the principle of mindful travel. Years later, I still think about what I saw, and did, and, most of all, learned from the people I met on those trips.

Science tells us that travel improves your personality and strengthens your sense of self. Researchers at the Columbia Business School found that navigating new places and engaging with different cultures rewires your brain and makes you more creative. Monet’s travels inspired his most magical paintings. Hemingway was born in Illinois, but *The Sun Also Rises* wouldn’t exist had he not traveled to France and Spain.

Travel makes us better. And we hope that this issue of *Range* (which, you may notice, has also evolved) inspires you to embark on a new, rich, defining experience — the kind that can only be found through travel. ♦



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What trip changed you for the better?

I’d love to hear about it at editor@ensembletravel.ca.

PHOTO: KATHERINE HOLLAND.