

Wanderlust



Apparently ‘wanderlust’ comes from the German for a ‘desire to hike’, although in English we now use it to refer to yearning and dreaming of any travel, to explore, to escape or to embrace new experiences. The way that Covid-19 has impacted on travel for leisure may seem unimportant, compared to our grief, stress or fears about loss of life, health, how our loved ones are coping or managing our work remotely. At the same time, our feelings of wanderlust may be stronger than ever. However small it might be compared to other worries, feelings about cancelled holidays or a sense of being trapped, are still real. Thinking about why travel matters to me does make me sad, but it also helps me think of ways I might be able to fill those holes while travel restrictions are still required.

I’ve heard that a big part of the benefit of a holiday actually comes from the **anticipation**. And there’s a kind of [grief](#) in crossing out all the dates in your diary. While I don’t feel ready to book in new trips, we can still embrace wanderlust, and dream of all the places we will go. I am also adding tiny new pleasures to my diary, like takeaway pizza and a visit to the library which is just reopening.

When I was a teenager, my Dad always used to say that ‘a **change** is as good as holiday’. This is a strange message from someone who has eaten the same thing for lunch every day for 30 years. But I suspect he said this because he was managing a farm in drought and an actual holiday felt impossible. With normal holidays off the cards, we have to be more creative to break the monotony of our new routines. Maybe wearing bright red lipstick on Friday nights, pitching a tent in your living room or walking all the dead-end streets in your neighbourhood? One weekend we chose Italy as a virtual destination, making wobbly gnocchi and listening to whatever came up when we typed ‘Italian’ into Spotify. These things feel ridiculous but making an effort does help.

I don’t love air travel, but I do love how aeroplanes offer a kind of **total break** from everything else. They

seem to be one of the last few places that no one expects you to reply to their emails. The biggest decision you make all day is 'chicken or fish?' as the air steward rolls past with the meal trolley. But a plane ticket is an expensive and carbon emissions-intensive way to get some rest. What helps you to switch off? Locking your laptop in the bottom drawer at the end of the work day, changing the alerts on your phone so you'll only see the most urgent, marking out five minutes in the day where any household members who disturb you will be assigned permanently to the duty of cleaning the bathroom? I've been listening to Jenny Odell talk about '[How to do nothing](#)', and it has inspired me to try to just notice things around me and consider 'idle time' as valuable.

Another reason many of us travel is to **experience new cultures, languages and scenery**. When it comes to this point, we're at an advantage working in an international organisation. When I email collaborators, I love hearing their descriptions of what is outside their windows – lush Spanish hillsides, English forests or a cold, lashing Pacific Ocean. In this issue of the *OIE In-house Times* you'll find more glimpses of different cultures and scenes from our colleagues, and we hope it will fulfil just a little of your wanderlust and offer you a little break in your day.

We wish to thank Heidi Congdon for writing this article.

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