

Consider Your Personality To Create An Awesome Vacation

**By
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"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." -Marcel Proust

From astrological signs to bodily fluids or humors, to body types and biological styles, to philosophy, psychology, and medicine, we have been trying since the beginning of time to come up with ways to predict and classify human personality types. The thinkers and healers have also felt the need to determine which personality types are "better" or "worse", "normal" or "abnormal", "healthy" or "maladaptive", which ones will "fit in", which will need "help". The standard that is set depends entirely on the environment and social structure. "I am always "better", "normal", "healthy" and "fitting in"! "You", if different from me, must then be "worse", "abnormal", "maladaptive" and "need help"!

We are more comfortable with others who are similar to us rather than different - same language and nationality, same skin color, same religion, same politics, and so on. We usually strive to be like, to be with, or to work with some ideal personality type. This works for us ... and then we travel and have a chance to see with new eyes.

A journey can be divided into three phases. Each of these can contain pleasure or anguish, challenge or routine. First we decide where, when, with whom, and for how long to travel. We prepare to leave our safe nest and take the steps to make the vacation a reality. Next we make the actual trip and face the unexpected and unpredictable. The third part is returning home, a re-entry as the same person who is intangibly different. The three steps blend together first as an actual experience and then a memory.

Think now about your next trip. Why are you going, beyond relaxation and a change of scenery? Does the excitement come in not knowing what you may experience - who you will meet, what you will learn? Or do you prefer to be more in control and be able to predict the experience? Every part of travel is ripe with opportunities to get to know ourselves better and gather energy for changes in other aspects of our lives. For most of us, the decision to travel is also a decision to postpone painting the house, trading in the car, or moving to a different apartment. The decision to travel instead can be well worth it. Traveling is an intangible investment in yourself.

Your ideas about traveling to foreign countries, other states, or even adjoining towns are formed during childhood. For those whose parents took them on trips, going away to unfamiliar places may bring memories of pleasure and adventure. For those left behind there is a fantasy about strange places off limits. Even now departures and arrivals will bring an emotional response rooted in early sense of abandonment. If one parent went more places than the other, you have developed two different internal modes - one of safety and one of adventure.

Planned itineraries are good options if you have limits or no experience with travel. Anxiety about language and loneliness is cushioned by the tour guide, who deciphers the new environment. You give this person a lot of authority and emotional power. As pure tourists you become, for a time, worry free, fed and cared for - a challenge for those who rarely allow others to look after them!

At the other extreme, as travelers you are on a quest for self-discovery. The extreme model is the solitary wanderer who learns the language, stays in a room with a local family, and enters into the local life. (S)he adopts to different food and clothing and explores the value system and customs of that region. For the traveler, financial limitations can be a spur toward more daring experiences. The lack of money can lead away from the heavily visited, expensive cities and resorts. There must be a willingness to arrive without a reservation and to find some cheap hotel, a local bus, an open-air market lunch. These adventures can lead to chance encounters with strangers and develop friendships. But such travel can also create a sharp yearning for the familiar as so many unfamiliar things can wear you out.

Whether to be a tourist or a traveler is a choice. If you are looking for a pause in order to gain new energy for your life, be a tourist. If you look to travel as a tool for insight into your life and inspiration to make changes, be a traveler.

There is a sense of anxiety and concern that builds in preparing for the trip. It is a series of good-byes and closures. As if living out the final days of life, you clean out drawers, make arrangements for pets and plants,

balance the checkbook, and clean out the refrigerator. Things are put in order and you are ready to take the plunge... and worry about what you forgot!

Fortunately, a characteristic of travel is social openness and camaraderie. Journeys are often shaped by the people you meet by chance. Flexibility is essential to take advantage of opportunities as they come up. You can learn much about yourself in how you keep in touch with those back home. Are you writing or calling from a sense of duty, homesickness, guilt, concern, or to just touch base and reconfirm that the bonds are still there. Notice what you buy as gifts and how you take photographs or keep a journal. It's a real insight!

As you head homeward, thoughts may come of how the new you will fit in the old setting. As bags are emptied and mementos unpacked, old routines begin again. But now you have gained a new sensitivity to your own culture and environment. You vow to sustain the resolutions about changing yourself and may have a sense of loss as the images of the trip blur. It may take a while to readjust depending on the people you met, the depth of adventure, and the distance you traveled from home. Enjoy this time, for it is transitory and the insights are precious as you now see with new eyes.

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