

2020 MCC Creative Writing Contest

Honorable Mention - Creative Non-Fiction Category

"Why Travel" by Kaitlyn Hansen

THUMP, THUMP, THUMP. My heart was nearly beating out of my chest with excitement as I waited in the seemingly endless line at TSA. I held my overstuffed luggage tight to my body while attempting to move forward. As I neared the front of the line, I glanced over at my travel companions who both were sporting similar expressions of glee. After passing through the metal detectors and avoiding the dreaded TSA pat-down, we were finally en route to our tropical vacation in The Philippines.

The airport clamored with the sounds of multiple languages being spoken, and the air was riddled with the scent of food from diverse vendors. In the moment, however, I drowned out all my senses to focus on one goal: to make it to my terminal on time. I used my small stature to my advantage, weaving back and forth through the thick airport crowd. The clock was ticking, and my heart rate was increasing with every step I took closer to the ‘finish line.’ *THUMP, THUMP, THUMP.* Finally, I let out a prolonged sigh of relief as my travel mates and I stopped in front of our gate, just in time to make the flight. However, the relief I felt quickly turned to knots in my stomach when a chipper flight attendant announced, “Sorry, folks, the intended aircraft for this flight needs repairs. The expected delay is two hours, we apologize for any inconveniences this may cause.” My heart sank.

Most people who travel regularly know that situation all too well. Flight delays are one of the many issues that can arise while travelling abroad. Many people find themselves hesitant to pack up and leave behind the comfort of their hometown to go experience how others live around the globe. They don’t want to leave their comfort zone because, let’s be honest, the internet and social media have made everyone paranoid. With just a couple clicks on a computer, anyone has access to numerous true horror stories that people have experienced while travelling. For example, a man who ate an unwashed peach in Croatia was subjected to “... the type of projectile vomiting that resembled Linda Blair in the exorcist...”, or a camp full of travellers in the Sahara Desert that had to spend the night lying on top of camel dung (“Bad Travel Experiences – Travellers Tell Their Worst Travel Tales”). When travelling, there is always a risk that something will go wrong. Luggage may get lost, valuables could be pickpocketed, or some other unfortunate event could pop up out of the blue. However, any of those could happen in day-to-day life as well. It is the chance that must be taken in order to have the experience of a lifetime.

When I exited the airport after a long flight, a bus was waiting for all of the passengers, including myself, that endured the never-ending flight delay. We departed from the Nikko-Narita Airport in Japan and took a short jaunt through downtown Tokyo to our hotel. I unpacked my bags from the bus and started toward the hotel entrance. The lobby alone left me in awe. A massive crystal chandelier sparkled overhead as I was warmly greeted by the staff. During my stay, I was treated to a smorgasbord of traditional Japanese food, culture, and excellent hospitality. Then, I was on my flight out to The Philippines the very next day, without any delays. Even through the delays, the magnificent experiences that I gained were worth the wait.

Travelling has its difficulties, of course, but its rewards are far greater. If they weren't, then no one would do it. So why would anyone want to travel? "You discover new beautiful, interesting places that make you want to come back and you experience different cultures that you weren't aware of," says Yii-Huei Phang, an avid traveller. Often there are pictures of scenic landscapes and extravagant architecture strewn on the walls of businesses or homes. Simply looking at a picture does not encapsulate the same awe-struck effect as seeing the scene in person, however. Travelling allows for the exploration of hidden gems throughout our diverse world and the creation of memories that will last forever.

Each place visited has its own unique charm and allows for an expanded worldview. Phang explains that "Traveling can develop a person's character, being open minded. You aren't enclosed in your bubble; you get outside of your comfort zone." Staying inside one's comfort zone is, in my opinion, one of the biggest reasons why more people don't travel. Travelling abroad opens a vast blackhole of unknowns that scares many people into staying on their couch and watching travel shows, without even giving it a chance. However, the spontaneity that happens during most international travels makes the best memories, and helps with personal growth. Dealing with struggles during cross-country vacations teaches problem-solving skills, aids in gaining more self-confidence, and broadens cultural perspectives. In Phang's experience, she learned about poverty and the struggles in other countries during her trip to Bosnia. In my experience, I learned patience and tenacity are rewarded if dealt with gracefully. After the barrier of the comfort zone is broken, the opportunity for cultural immersion and enrichment emerges. The ability to experience cultures from around the world is eye-opening and expands one's global knowledge.

Deciding to travel abroad for the first time was one of the best decisions that I have ever made. When I got back home to my small town, it was like looking at the world with a new set of eyes. My trip made me appreciate what I already have, and inspired me to continue looking for more. Today's society is hooked on watching their screens for the latest movie, videogame, or television show from the confines of their living area; so, I urge those with even a hint of wanderlust to look past their screens for once, and go see the world.

Works Cited

Phang, Yii-Huei. "The Importance of Travelling". Huffpost, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-importance-of-traveling_b_3652548, 25 July 2013, Web.

"Bad Travel Experiences- Travellers Tell Their Worst Travel Tales". Adventures in middle-aged travel, <https://adventures-in-middle-aged-travel.com/worst-travel-experiences/>, Web.