

it's the Journey not the destination

GETTING UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH DESTINATIONS CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS SLOWING THINGS DOWN AND MAKING THE MOST OF THE JOURNEY. **HANNAH JAMES** EXPLORES THE IDEA OF ENJOYING TRAVEL, FOR TRAVEL'S SAKE

Why is it that getting from A to B is often seen as the necessary evil of the travel world? Something that is in the way of getting out there and enjoying the destination. When it comes to a long haul flight, squashed into a pretty small seat and breathing recycled air with nothing but a teeny screen or teeny window onto the earth below to entertain then yes, I agree, the journey is a means to an end. However, there are alternatives if you have the imagination and drive to work them out.

The idea of taking part in a journey holds huge appeal to many travellers, but it's easy to rule it out, concluding that we don't have the time to do it. It sounds idealistic, romantic and a lot of fun, but the practicalities of it just don't work in our busy lives – or do they?

Enjoying a journey is much more than a romantic notion involving months on the road, seeking out undiscovered corners of the world – although if you do have months to spare, then why not? – the reality is that enjoying the journey simply slows you down, opening up new perspectives on your trip.

Travelling can be as exciting as arriving, if not more, and there are plenty of forms of transport offering a chance for travellers to make the most out of their journey. Editor of Time Out's *Flight-Free Europe* Chris Moss, 42, is no stranger to making the most out of a journey: "I am, like most men, a closet train spotter. I like trains, buffet cars, platforms and the social side of trains. I also enjoy road trips, when you have the freedom to stop and explore wherever you choose. Ships – even ferries – are also pleasant, especially out of season, and at night you still get that romantic

trans-Atlantic sensation of the wide open sea and the wind on your face. In fact, taking a journey can mean donkeys, bicycles, walking, all the types of travel that keep you close to the ground."

Tales of great explorers like Captain James Cook and Christopher Columbus crossing oceans all those years ago have inspired generations of travellers, but such pre-air travel journeys were inevitably made more intrepid by the risks of an unknown world. However, there's nothing to stop us turning our own travels into a journey that Paul Theroux would be proud of, simply by leaving fast paced life at home. Rather than rushing to reach a final destination, think about all those places in between; they may not be in guidebooks, or home to famous sights, but what about the people, landscapes and undiscovered secrets? And, as Chris suggests,

setting out on a journey full of unknowns makes travel enticing. "I love the first minutes of boarding a train, packing the car boot and pumping the tyres. The anticipation is so exciting."

Turning your next trip into a journey is simple – firstly think about how to take the same route in new ways. Consider crossing the Bay of Biscay by ferry to Spain instead of flying, or sit back and watch the Rocky Mountains change into the prairies as you go by train from Vancouver to Montreal instead of covering thousands of miles flying above. Not only will you experience your destination at close range, but your carbon footprint will also be reduced.

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN

As a frequent traveller to Greece to run tours for walkingplus.co.uk, Gilly Cameron Cooper, 50, wanted to investigate an eco-sensitive



Gilly Cameron Cooper at Budapest Station

alternative to flying, and so back in March of this year took the train across Europe. "It was three days of seeing and experiencing landscapes, people and countries instead of three hours of air travel.

"Through the landscape and the locals I talked to, I saw the differences between each country; striking differences shaped by the movement of people, and the lottery of historical events. The shabbiness and poverty of Romania, for example, compared with the neighbouring nations of Bulgaria and Hungary.

appeals of travel, and it's exhilarating creating your own Jack Kerouac style story; being able to choose your route, take your time and stop when you want.

"The whole journey is fulfilling and we love getting there as much as, if not more than, arriving," says Alice. "The unplanned detours and anticipation experienced along the way often make our best memories."

It may be the goal of many travellers, but getting to the heart of a place can be difficult; meeting locals and getting beyond tourist traps is a good place to start. Escape

"ROAD TRIPS ALLOW FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE, TWO OF THE GREAT APPEALS OF TRAVEL, CHOOSING YOUR ROUTE, STOPPING WHEN YOU WANT"

"I improved my geographical, historical and political knowledge of countries I was rather hazy about. Now I actually read news reports about them with interest. It slowed me down – though I was never bored or impatient."

How you choose to make your journey is personal, but it doesn't have to be complicated. Simply taking the car onto the continent and driving through the French countryside could offer a new discovery of a country that you thought already familiar. Scott, 36, and Alice Griffin, 32, travel by motor home with their young daughter Isabella and Milla the dog, because of the freedom it offers: "When my other half mentioned a folding camper, I was horrified: 'me, a caravanner?' but the idea grew on me. Now I love waking up at home, but with a different view each day."

Road trips allow freedom and independence, two of the great

Expeditions run overland trips to Africa introducing travellers to the reality of the continent at a measured pace. Founder of the company, James Leggett, explains the appeal: "Africa is intoxicating, harsh, beautiful and immediate. There's something very real and instant about Africa that grabs the senses and many of its most amazing secrets are hidden along its roads. On an overland journey you get to see it, breathe it, smell it and live it. Rushing only frustrates and encourages a lack of understanding of a place, a people or a culture."

Overland trips are full of surprises, particularly in developing countries, so be prepared for things not to go as intended. Flexibility is vital, but overcoming difficulties can increase the sense of achievement at the end of the trip.

"The appeal of any journey is what happens in its duration,"



Alice Griffin with her dog Milla

» James continues. "I led a trip that crossed many dry sand riverbeds, which was exhausting. The irony of my 'Sand Lover' t-shirt didn't go unnoticed, but the satisfaction felt on overcoming the challenge was unrivalled. Everyone looked back with great affection and a fantastic sense of achievement."

TRAVEL BY ANY MEANS

Crossing a continent is one thing, but what about journeying to the other side of the world? On his latest journey, Charley Boorman did exactly that, but rather than use a motorbike like on his trips with good friend Ewan McGregor, this time Charley went 'by any means': "We wanted to cross the

happens when you're on a real journey and that is exactly what is appealing about taking one."

As if to show that it's not just the stars that can take such epic adventures, Nick Tuppen, 26, and Holly Gee, 24, are setting off on a similar adventure this month. The pair plan to circumnavigate the globe using as many modes of transport as possible, including tandem bikes, kayaks, sail-boats, hiking boots, motorbikes, trains, buses, tuktuks and freighter ship. "If all goes to plan," according to Holly, "18 months from now we'll get back on the tandem in Istanbul for the final leg of the journey."

Compared to taking the car to France, this is a pretty extreme



Nick and Holly will use any transport possible

"FOR ME, THE ACTUAL TRAVEL BIT IS THE EXPERIENCE; GETTING FROM A TO B. THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS ON A REAL JOURNEY"

world using any form of transport – bikes, trucks, donkeys, all sorts – and choose something appropriate to the countries we were in. It is tough to pick a favourite, but tuktuks in India are hilarious – you take your life in your own hands."

Hitching lifts with truck drivers in Iran, spending days at sea with freighter ship crews and meeting people onboard trains gave Charley and his team a chance to meet locals in their own environment. "Even though you don't get a lot of time with these people, you manage to get a little bit of flavour from them which is what we tried to do throughout the trip," Charley told us. "It's become so easy these days to jump on a plane and go anywhere, and we miss out on a lot. For me, the actual travel bit is the experience; getting from A to B. There's always something that

journey, but goes to show what is possible with some careful planning and a lot of imagination. Circling the entire world may not suit your time or budget, but sections of Nick and Holly's trip are actually do-able for anyone, and you can follow their progress on their blog www.3mphroundtheworld.com. But what is the motivation behind this trip?

Holly explains: "Taking a journey changes your mindset; you're out of your comfort zone and hungry for adventure, making you more open to the people, places and challenges around you. This leads to the unexpected experiences – however big or small, terrifying or funny, challenging or relaxing – that make travelling so addictive and exhilarating."

"To make up for the loss of speed, we will embrace the slow."

Charley Boorman's By Any Means.

Watch Charley travel from Ireland to Australia by any means possible on BBC TWO, Sunday nights in the autumn.

For more details on the trip and for everything you need to know about planning your own amazing adventure, visit www.byanymeans.co.uk.

The *By Any Means* DVD (£19.99, Universal Pictures) is out on November 3 and the book *By Any Means* written by Charley Boorman (£18.99, Sphere) is out on November 25.



Charley Boorman in Serbia



Charley Boorman pics © By Any Means/BBC



Charley Boorman bikes through Georgia

Whether it's riding motorbikes, sailing oceans, bumping over terrains in a 4x4 or using your own two legs to cycle between places, making your own way from A to B can be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Sam Greatrex, 23, cycled from Sydney to Perth which left him feeling like one of the intrepid explorers of days gone by.

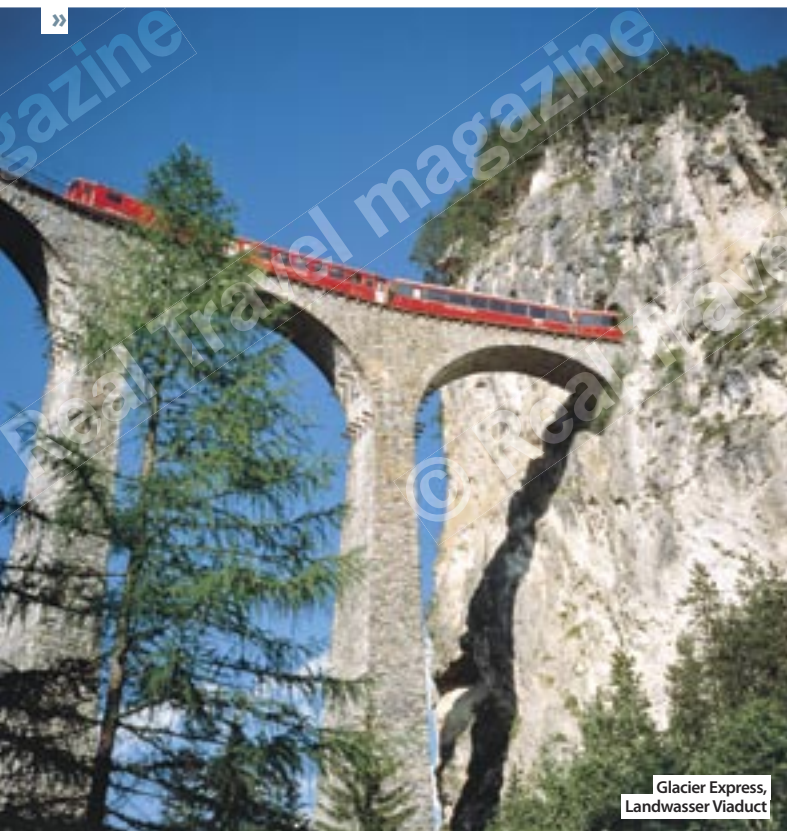
"It gave me a great sense of discovery," Sam says. "Arriving at sights like the Twelve Apostles, even with hoards of tourists, you can't help but feel like an explorer."

"It may not be Guinness World Record speed, but cycling at 30kmph rather than driving at 100kmph showed the diversity of the landscape." On his 62 day journey, this huge country, known for its vast empty wildernesses, unwound itself in front of Sam, slowly showing him the incredible landscape, but also introducing him to the friendly locals.

"Arriving in Perth was a great relief and there were spectacular roads and sights along the way, but it was the Aussies that made a daunting trip uncomplicated."

Sam isn't the only one to use pedal power on a journey, but Bernie Friend, 36, author of





Glacier Express,
Landwasser Viaduct



Eleanor Marriott
waits for the bus
Latin America



Bernie Friend
on the North
Sea Cycle Route

Cycling Back to Happiness, had different reasons behind his choice to bike the North Sea Cycle Route. After losing three members of his family, Bernie wanted to do something positive to get him through hard times: "Cycling for hours on end helped me put things into some sort of perspective."

More than a physical journey, Bernie's trip was about proving something to himself, but he was

flying as an important part of the journey or you could miss out on some incredible views.

"Use the flight by getting a window seat and looking out as much as possible," suggests Marc Latham, 42. "It's usually better to travel overland if you can, but on the other hand, I still remember flying over the Barrier Reef and having a view far superior to the journey along the coast."

"ON A HOLIDAY YOU MIGHT GET A TAN BEFORE HEADING BACK TO YOUR SAME OLD LIFE. ON A JOURNEY THE EXPERIENCE OF TRAVEL IS YOUR LIFE"

quickly addicted. "Cycling through a destination means you don't miss a thing; you physically absorb the countries you pass through. Knowing I'd used nothing more than a raw fusion of my own legs, sweat and a dirty bike to cycle thousands of kilometers was a great buzz. You just want to keep going! Curiosity is a never satisfied curse."

DON'T STOP FLYING

While ground level travel, whatever mode of transport, slows down a journey, it isn't always possible to avoid flying – if you're planning to drive the circumference of Australia, for example, it's asking a lot to get there without using international flights as well. So don't rule out

Seeing the world from above can put a new perspective on your trip, as Marc goes on to explain: "If you've already seen what the land looks like up close and the aerial view will provide a different view, then it's definitely worth it. It also offers a chance to see land you may never see from the ground. Seeing tiny human settlements among the vast wilderness of the Middle East's deserts or flying to North America over Newfoundland and Labrador were both memorable flights."

This sums up the most important thing to consider when planning a journey: it's all about making the best of every situation. We're not suggesting you have to spend

infobox.

SUGGESTED TOUR OPERATORS

OzBus
020 8641 1443
www.oz-bus.com

Escape Expeditions
01284 706 616
www.escapeexpeditions.co.uk

Bedouin Paths
020 8744 0474
www.bedouinpaths.com

Darjeeling Tours
01777 817 798
www.darjeelingtours.co.uk

Africa Expedition Support
00254 (0)725 459 063
www.africaexpeditionssupport.com

360 Expeditions
020 7183 4360
www.360-expeditions.com

18 months travelling at a snail's pace – just work out how to get the best of the journey you're making, however long, short or adventurous it may be.

"The end point is just an excuse for doing a trip," concludes Eleanor Marriott, 38, who fell in love with Latin America while she was there last year. "On a holiday you might get a tan, see a few interesting places, take the odd photo and if you're lucky make a friend or two before heading back to your same old life. On a journey the experience of travel becomes your life." ■



Sam Greatrex
cycled across Australia