

8 Ways to Spice Up Your Travels

Since travelling became a significant part of my lifestyle, I'd come to realize that a conventional travel itinerary was just not enough to feed my thirst for complete cultural immersion or adventurous endeavors. It was time to ditch the guidebook and delve a little deeper, to get to know my destination inside out. Slow travel (usually means spending more than a month at a place) definitely does the trick, but if you haven't got the time, here are some other ways to help spice up your journey and make it more than just travel.



1. Volunteer

Over the past ten years, voluntourism has gained popularity, especially among young travelers. Many people include a short volunteering stint in their travel plans. I personally volunteered at an education office in a small village in Tanzania two years back – the emotional ride was one of the best times in my life. Programs such as the Peace Corps assign volunteers to places that need help. Many organizations require a program fee, so do your research before signing up.

2. Hop on a Cruise

I'm not talking typical Caribbean party cruises. Think mid-sized cruises that bring you through the isolated Norwegian fjords or the massive icebergs in the Arctic and island-hopping in the Galapagos. Cruising offers a different perspective, especially in remote and secluded areas like the North Pole. They allow us to get to territories that cannot be visited otherwise. Discount cruises can be an interesting way to travel and even a cost-cutting one.



3. Learn a Skill

From culinary classes to meditation courses, there are plenty of learning opportunities that gives you the

chance to know the local culture better. Traveling to China? Take a tai-chi class or a kung-fu introductory course and you'll leave with more than just photographs. In Japan, you can take a class from a veteran geisha to learn about their traditional ethics and behavior. Many embark on culinary tours around Italy and Spain to dig deeper into their gastronomy, learning to whip up typical Mediterranean dishes and sample local wine.

4. Couchsurf

The trend is here to stay: couchsurfing is now used worldwide, where members contact locals who are willing to offer them a couch to crash in or just meet up for a coffee. I personally have tried couchsurfing several times and have had amazing experiences every single time. It's the perfect way to meet locals, understand their lifestyle, cultural habits and customs.

5. Book an Adventure Tour

Whether you are climbing icebergs in the Patagonia or trekking through the Amazon Jungle, an adventure tour definitely gives you the thrills of travel. It challenges you to your limit, gives you an adrenaline-pumping experience and allows you to explore a part of the country you might not be able to on your own. A tour usually takes up a chunk of your travel budget, but hey, no pain no gain. It's often cheaper to book the tour at your destination rather than through the internet.



6. Pick Up a New Language

Another popular traveling option is language immersion: the most typical being Spanish classes in Guatemala, Argentina or Spain. Latin America is a top choice for language courses thanks to the low cost of living, rich culture and wide range of options available. These days, Mandarin is becoming the hottest language – so why not head further afield to Beijing? English is not commonly spoken, so you'll definitely get plenty of practice.

7. Homestay

Most study-abroad programs consist of homestays where local families host you in the comfort of their homes, cooking you typical meals and speaking to you only in their language. Those who have had first-hand experience only have good things to say about this. Many build strong relations with their host families and often keep in touch after returning home. Even if you're not on a study-abroad program,

there are still many opportunities to go on a homestay. For instance, accommodation in Cuba is often in the form of homestays. They are cheaper and a better choice for many.

8. Get a Part-time Job

Work as diving instructor, teacher, chef, au-pair or cruise crew, there are thousands of working options available. For many countries, being a native English speaker gives you the advantage to find work easily. In Spain, you can easily find work as a teacher in an English summer camp. Depending on your skills, short-term work not only allows you to earn an extra income, but also gives you the experience of living and working in a new country.

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