



Everyone Needs a Holiday Sometime

There are plenty of TV shows about vacations. Viewers can sit in the comfort of their lounge rooms and be transported to destinations around the country and the world. Anyone looking for ideas will be captivated by scenes of holiday-makers lazing on pristine beaches, or dining alfresco while a tropical sun sets in the background. They can imagine themselves there or somewhere similar; and if they aren't immediately prompted to fire up the Internet to see what's on offer, the idea is in their heads and will be actioned soon enough. Others who couldn't even afford the air fare to such exotic venues still appreciate the feeling they create, that pleasant thought of relaxation and doing something other than work. Although their plans will be simpler, they provide the incentive to soldier on until the day arrives when they can leave the drudgery behind for a couple of weeks.

Taking a break from the stodgy routine once in a while is a tonic that most appreciate as a necessary inclusion in their lifestyle. Certainly it costs, and not just in terms of money. A fair amount of organisation goes into arrangements, both for the holiday itself and to ensure the least disruption to whatever is left behind for the period. Work rosters have to be adjusted and contingencies allowed for, adding to the pressure of the daily grind. There will be times when the extra hassles seem to make the entire exercise counter-productive. After all, vacations are supposed to help recharge the batteries, not drain them completely. The saving grace is in the implementation of the actual holiday plans - where to go, what to do when you get there and what to take. These are often small yet positive details, reminders of pleasant days to come; and with them anticipation and the buzz of excitement are revived. This is a future event gradually setting in concrete - on a specific date it will happen; and looking forward to it provides the motivation to plod through the trials and tribulations of the weeks leading up to it.

Decisions regarding things like location and activities once there should depend on who is going. Families with children clearly need to consider the youngest members who can make the lives of grown-ups thoroughly miserable if they aren't allowed to enjoy the experience. By the same token, however, the adults are on holiday too, so having to face the same chores and problems that they are trying to take respite from is not an appealing prospect. It might save a lot of hassles later by including everyone in the planning stage; and at that time, the chief organiser should watch for reactions as each suggestion is put forward. Glum expressions, sighs and a rolling of the eyes tell tales that shouldn't be ignored.

Quite often, there are thoughts of repeating past trips that are still memorable; but places change over time, as do people; and returning to old haunts may not be as pleasant as it was under different circumstances. We used to take our children on camping holidays, mainly because it was all the budget would stretch to; and we made a point of not visiting the same venue twice. Once the kids were off our hands, we went back to a couple just on our own, imagining that we could refresh memories of days gone by. It was a disappointing experience and nowhere near as fulfilling. On the reverse side, our son was hoping to rekindle the joys of his early days and took his family camping. It was a complete disaster and he vowed never to do it again. These are the dangers of expectations, of trying to re-live the past. Some folk don't even consider an alternative,

preferring to book again for next year before leaving to return home. That's fine if it suits, as long as the repeat performance is agreeable to all involved. If not, then it might be better to pick somewhere new.

I've had another thought about that. Everyday living is usually pre-programmed. We know what's coming up and are ready for it. So, if holidays are supposed to be different, the element of adventure and not knowing can introduce a surprising contrast to the tedious norm. Obviously certain plans have to be made, especially when the event is a group thing; but the magical mystery aspect is still an option. Not every single day has to be arranged in advance based on the tourist brochures. Where would be the harm in just booking the accommodation, then playing the rest by ear? Talking over where to go and what to do next while actually on holiday would surely make for better decisions and a far more enjoyable outcome?

When only one or two are involved, the sky's the limit. We discovered that on the road. It was a time of year when booking in advance was unnecessary because it was well out of the busy season, so we set off, figuring we'd take a chance on what we could get. Our destination was a particular coastal resort, but only initially. Being a long drive, there was a stop-over half way. Next day, we were about an hour into the drive and whichever of us was checking the road map noticed a national park east of our original destination. It offered camp sites, but not much else; and it was right where the bitumen finished - a sign to city-dwellers such as us that the great unknown started there. What about it then - do we, or don't we? Yes, we did, and it was magic. How would you have been, waking in the morning to the noise of black cockatoos chewing lumps out of Banksia flowers barely a metre from your tent and taking no notice of you? Already full of excitement from our adventurous diversion, we decided there and then that this was the way to go. So, we stayed another couple of days then set off, not to the seaside resort in our plan, but to another national park further along 40 kilometres of dirt track. Since then, any plans we make are basic and very changeable.

Your choice of holiday is yours alone, but you do need one. When the time eventually comes to say farewell to work colleagues and head home for the last-minute packing, take a deep breath and re-invent your mood. Your holiday has already begun. How you behave from this moment on will ensure its success. Be determined to enjoy. There will be nothing you can't cope with, no-one will phase you, and life beyond the coming vacation is an idea in the mind of someone else. You and your family or partner deserve this. All you have to do now is make it work. And so you can!

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