

On Being :

# TRAVELERS

*Tourist Trekking the cities and countrysides*



Travel Tested ideas for  
Keeping the FUN in seeing the sites  
- on a budget!

by **John W. Carls**  
(Who has learned the hard way)  
(and sometimes it hurt - a lot)

Tips  
From

Currency to Rental Cars  
Electronics to Traveling Light  
Traveling Safe to Minimizing Jet-lag  
- and yes Dealing with the TSA



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Kim and I would like to thank all those who have shared travel tips, insights and experiences with us along the way. What a world it opened up.

# On Being Travelers

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## On Travel



Lets face it, travel can be a nightmare. Airports, airlines, baggage fees, getting through security and TSA pat-downs, layovers and a good case of jet lag can make what should be a great experience seem more like torture. Anyone who has traveled can recall their travel day from hell. Mine and Kim's was a 38 hour ordeal that began with sitting on the tarmac in Rome waiting for

a no-show passenger's bag to be removed from the hold thinking, "oh crap, we are never going to make our connection in Paris". Running through Charles de Gaulle airport and getting to the gate just in time to watch the plane backing away. Racing off to the next terminal – which must have been in Spain – only to miss the alternate flight. Arriving in Detroit in the middle of the night, quite scenic. Next a red-eye to Denver that arrives too late to make the last connection to home on the western slope of Colorado. Six hours of squirming in a hideously uncomfortable chair in Denver and finally boarding the last flight. I remember the takeoff and most of the landing but not the drive home – I was the one driving.

So why travel? Why not just get the video? Why would anyone put themselves through a day like that? Was it worth it? Absolutely! My wife Kim and I had just ended 3 weeks in Rome, Siena, Montepulciano, Florence, Riomaggiore, and Milan. When I think back to that time, I don't remember the day from hell. I remember the people we met, the sights we saw and the things we experienced; the Borghese Gallery in Rome, the Colosseum, the David, laying in bed in Siena thinking "this building was here when Michelangelo wandered these streets". I remember the best double shot of espresso I've ever had, real Italian food, sunset on the Chinqua Terra and window shopping in Milan. The trip home has

been stashed away. I suspect into that same spot where I stuffed my memories of my broken arm and my first date.

Before I travel anywhere, I do a lot of research – one great side benefit of travel. But no matter how many photos and videos I poured through, no matter how many movies I watched or guide books I scoured, they really didn't prepare me for the emotional impact of rounding the corner in the Academia and seeing the David for the first time; or for exiting

the subway tunnel and seeing the Colosseum, or the Cathedral in Milan. They couldn't prepare me for the wonderful and sometimes painful conversations I would have with people who see the world from a different perspective; or for the sense of total calm that enveloped

me while sitting in il Campo in Siena on a warm Italian evening sipping local wine and watching the sun turn the tower golden as it sets.





Travel transforms what is basically an intellectual pursuit, like watching a National Geographic special, or an episode of Rick Steves or reading a guide book, into sights, smells, tastes, emotions and memories. You can't walk where the gladiators walked or really see the view from Caesar's box seats or feel the smooth ruts worn deep into the paving stones by hundreds and hundreds of chariots unless you travel. Travel makes the abstract tangible.

In the few paragraphs that originally followed the one above I found myself straining to wax philosophic about why people need to travel. But for me it isn't that complicated so I'll leave the philosophy discussion to the wordsmiths whose quotes I added to the end of this entry and I'll stick to the more simple explanation of why I travel.

I love to travel because it helps satisfy my innate curiosity and my sense of wonder. It helps fill in blank spots in my personal database and gaps in my education. It fills my head with a few answers and even more questions. Why do hotdogs in Germany really taste like meat? How did we get to the point where the fizzy yellow water we drink is considered beer? Why do kids in Europe seem more like kids and seem to have more fun? Why are ingredient lists elsewhere simple and ours read like a chemistry text? Why does fruit taste like fruit and

tomatoes like tomatoes except in our supermarkets? Why is it that people seem to thrive eating from markets that the FDA would shut down before the sun set? Why doesn't everyone have a 25 cubic foot refrigerator and seem to get by just fine with eight? You know, important questions about the human experience. Things I would never have even considered had I not hopped a flight.

Travel, the reasons we travel, and what we receive from it are as unique as fingerprints. Klm and I find as much fascination in learning how the monks survived the middle ages in Ireland while we walk through their rock hovels as we do experiencing the opulent lifestyles of the Medici or mad King Ludwig while we gawk at their castles and cathedrals. Your reasons, the answers you find and the questions raised will certainly be different. One thing I can guarantee, you will never view the world around you, your life, your home or history quite the same after you return.

Here's hoping your "travel days from Hell" are few, your skies clear and calm, your glass full and your flights half empty.....