



INTRODUCTION

*A*t Lonely Planet we're obsessed about making travel plans. No sooner have we got our bags through the door, than we are mulling over our next adventure. That's because we are well-versed in the power of travel to change lives. We've felt that rich new perspective gained from immersion in a foreign culture, and we've experienced that deep wonder at the natural world after spending time in strange and awesome landscapes. We also know how the challenges of travel – the arriving-in-a-new-place-and-not-knowing-a-single-soul moments – teach us so much about ourselves, helping us become all the more stronger and wiser for our next trip.

In this book, we have collected together what we believe are the most extraordinary and transformative travel experiences out there. These travel goals are not about ticking off a list of far-away sights (although far-away sights do feature), they are about a life filled with variety and self-discovery. Each goal is enriching in some way, either because it's about forging stronger connections with the natural world, helping a community clear a coastline of plastic, or spending a week on silent retreat. They are not always easy.

In fact, some of them are intentionally hard; the book's structure of six chapters of increasingly more committed and rewarding goals means you are able to find a set of goals that is right for you. And have others to aim for.

So how did we go about compiling this list? We started out by asking our pool of travel writers about the travel experiences that had a life-changing effect for them – what would they recommend everyone try at least once in their lives? We got a very varied response. Some things cropped up time and again – such as solo travel and volunteering – while some were very individual, but convincing goals, such as starting a sketch journal. We then honed this list to 120 experiences that we felt would be the most personally rewarding. For each goal we explain why you should consider giving it a go and give at least three recommendations for where you can put the goal into action.

We hope this book will inspire you to think of travel as an opportunity for positive change, whether that's by learning about yourself, other cultures, or by giving back in some way. And of course to create your own set of goals that are personal to you.



1

Travel without a goal
Embrace the off season
Spend time on water
Explore an abandoned place
Take the sleeper train
Find beauty in detail
Travel for laughs
Dine out alone
Become absorbed in village life
Retrace the steps of history
Be a tourist in
 your own country
See a city in a jet-lagged haze
Eat like a local
Be transported by
 the human voice
Sleep under the stars
Accept the kindness of strangers
Seek out sacred places
Keep a sketch journal
Treat your body
Travel on horseback

2

- 10 Find your supper
- 12 Make a pilgrimage
- 14 Go out dancing
- 16 Get off the tourist trail
- 20 Try something new
- 22 Have adventures with children
- 24 Be uplifted by colour
- 26 Volunteer at home
- 28 Haggle
- 30 Hide out to watch birds
Leave your smartphone at home
- 34 Live with locals
- 36 Find peace among trees
- 38 Learn about the darker
side of history
- 40 Immerse yourself in local culture
- 42 Find your tribe in a foreign city
- 44 Learn a craft
- 46 Take a plunge in open water
- 48 See the magnitude
of the earth's power
- 50
- 52 Feel the rush

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94	Have an epic travel fail	140
96	Join a conservation project	142
	Visit dark places	144
100	Eat insects	146
102	Get lost in a crowd	148

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- Summit a mountain
- Retrace your roots
- Cross a remote border
- Write a travel blog
- Become an ocean defender
- Feel out of this world
- Embrace your sexuality
- Come home fitter
- Upgrade
- Travel by bike
- Experience culture shock
- See a rocket launch
- Seek out the relics of
an ancient civilisation
- Get out of your comfort zone
- Watch and wait
- Take a vintage
transport method
- Engage all your senses
- Live on the fringe
- Go off grid
- Visit empty places

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152 Appreciate the ordinary
154 Look into the eyes
156 of a predator
158 Travel without plastic
160 Descend into the abyss
162 Challenge your perceptions
164 Behold a travel icon
166 Traverse a country on foot
168 Meditate with masters
170 Take a leap of faith
172 Change your identity
176 Survive in the wilderness
Watch a total solar eclipse
178 Preserve the planet
180 Test your mettle
182 Help save an
endangered species
186 Stand at the end of the world
188 Go meat-free on the road
190 Experience community living
192 Take a big trip alone
194 Learn about fragile places

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Towns left to ruin chime an urgent warning about humankind's effect on the planet, discovers **Anita Isalska**. But even in Chernobyl's exclusion zone, it's possible for hope to bloom.

EXPLORE AN ABANDONED PLACE

After the miraculous joy of a new-born baby, 'normal life' with kids can sometimes feel like a relentlessly hard grind. I'm lucky to have five children, with 16 years between my eldest and youngest. While I have the briefest memory of the thousands of school runs I've done, the scores of sports days, nativity plays and school concerts I've dutifully sat through, the memories I can recall most vividly are the times I've taken my kids out of our usual routine and gone on an adventure.

Adventures with children can be anywhere and it doesn't have to cost a lot. This is important to remember. You don't actually need any expensive kit, or airfare, to experience excitement and wonder. For a toddler walking through a field of long grass, discovering the mini beasts and plants there, is a wild journey in itself: there's a reason, after all, why *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, about a family walk, is one of the best-loved children's books. And even the moodiest teenager will unfold and relax sitting around a campfire, before sleeping under the stars.

One of the most brilliant adventures I've had with my kids was a late-night walk around a lake near our house. The size of the shimmering white moon, the feeling of the dried grasses moving beneath our palms, and the wild stories we came up with as we walked and talked. It was the simplest journey, but it is a memory that's now an important part of the narrative of our family life.

Even when you do take children far away, on a distant travel adventure, the thing they remember can be surprising. After I took my five-year-old son on a riding safari in South Africa, what excited him most wasn't passing through herds of zebra or giraffe, but the small, strange beauty of the skin of a puff adder he found in the dust near our lodge.

Of course, adventure travel, when it does happen further afield, is a glorious, mind-expanding way to teach children about the world we share, while also encouraging them to walk on that world with greater fortitude, patience, resilience and respect.

Kayaking through rain-drenched fjords in Norway, my then eight-year old and five-year-old learnt that although the natural environment and heavy rain weren't something they could ever control, being prepared and thinking ahead meant the difference



between a wet but exhilarating day and a soggy, cold and uncomfortable one.

Adventure travel also teaches children that with risks come rewards. My six-year-old daughter might have objected to leaving the safe, warm comfort and endless hot chocolate of an Austrian ski lodge at dawn, but once she ventured out into the cold, she was rewarded with a real-life *Frozen* world of virgin snow and glittering blue skies.

If the idea of venturing far afield with children is daunting, remember that it can often be easier than your day-to-day routine at home. Babies, especially new-borns, are surprisingly easy to travel with, since they're so portable, and even toddler tantrums can be easier to manage when not cooped up at home. And the world around – from a bustling market to a busy train ride to a walk through a park – is a natural learning environment, far different to the confines of a classroom.

Sure, there will be arguments and tears along the way and relationships will be tested. But more than anything adventure travel strengthens the family unit. The best week we spent together as a family was cycling down the Danube, almost the length of Austria, from Linz to Vienna, when the children were teens, pre-teens and the youngest was a baby, wobbling along for the journey on the back of a bike. It was a tough, brilliant, exhilarating week, and one which left me with an abiding sense we'd really achieved something as a family.



“You don’t actually need any expensive kit, or airfare, to experience excitement and wonder.”

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*Above (left and right): Monkeying around near the Ouzoud Falls, Morocco; spotting elephants in Zimbabwe.
Previous page: Riding camels in the desert*

DESERT SAND DUNES

Oman

One of the oldest civilisations on the Arabian Peninsula, Oman is ripe for family adventure: camp in Bedouin tents, take a thrilling desert ride down Jebel Akhdar, go dolphin watching, or explore the dunes at Wahiba Sands and Nizwa, the former capital with a 17th-century fort. Avoid extremely hot July and August; October to April are ideal. **HOW Families World Wide** (www.familiesworldwide.co.uk) offers a seven-night trip including one night in a tent.

SAFARI ADVENTURE

Zimbabwe

Introduce your children to safari at Gonarezhou Bush Camp in Zimbabwe, a mobile, tented camp, and at Amalinda Lodge, in the Matobo Hills. Since there are few big cats in this area, children can actually get out of the safari vehicles and explore the area. There's also ancient cave art to discover, and a young explorer programme enabling children to get to grips with safari basics. Best done from September to December. **HOW Mavros Safaris** (www.mavrossafaris.com) runs a 10-night trip, with flights to Victoria Falls and within Zimbabwe.

THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS

Morocco

After exploring the maze-like souks of Marrakesh (a great way to introduce children to the magic of Morocco), head into the Atlas Mountains. Take a camel trek up to the Kasbah before travelling through the villages of Timalizen to the land of the Berbers. For thrill-seeking children there's white-water rafting and abseiling. The beachside beauty of Essaouira is a worthwhile stop, especially for the fish markets and watersports. Avoid June to August, the hottest months. **HOW Scott Dunn** (www.scottdunn.co.uk) offers seven nights in Morocco.



BE UPLIFTED BY COLOUR

Psychologists have long stated that colour can influence our emotions, and in cultures across the world different hues are used as a way to express. Colour can invigorate and soothe, you just need to know where to look.

TAKE IT FURTHER

See an awesome visual spectacle:

Witness a swarm, p112

Tap into your artistic side:

Unleash your creativity, p130

HOLI FESTIVAL

India

The most boisterous of Hindu festivals, Holi waves goodbye to winter (usually in March) and welcomes in spring in a rainbow of colours. Hindus celebrate by throwing coloured water and *gula* (powder) at anyone within range.

HOW The date of Holi changes every year. Mathura in Uttar Pradesh and Mumbai are great places to celebrate.

GRAND PRISMATIC SPRING

USA

Explore the multicoloured mist of this gorgeous pool and its spectacularly vivid rainbow rings of algae in Yellowstone National Park. From above, the spring looks like a giant blue eye weeping exquisite multi-hued tears.

HOW For the most dramatic photos, drive south to Fairy Falls trailhead and walk for 1 mile (1.6km) to the platform.

KEUKENHOF GARDENS

The Netherlands

Botanists, flower-lovers and tourists alike make the pilgrimage each year to one of the world's most famous flower gardens, Keukenhof in Lisse, to ooh and ahh over winding rows of tulips, delicate orchids and snow-like fluttering blossoms.

HOW The park is open for eight weeks in March to May; Lisse is a 40-minute bus journey from Amsterdam.

CHEFCHAOUEN

Morocco

No one really knows why the buildings in this Moroccan mountain town are painted blue. The simple truth is they are very blue, blindingly and beautifully so.

HOW The town is three hours by bus from Tangier, or an hour by grand taxi from Tétouan.

Left: Grand Prismatic Spring, Yellowstone National Park

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LEAVE YOUR SMARTPHONE AT HOME

Many of us will readily admit to spending too much time glued to our smartphones, but can they really detract from a sense of place? And if so, how can we better engage our senses, tune into nature and connect with others to become more mindful, conscientious travellers?

Sure, we know it's hard. In a switched-on world, being constantly connected via your smartphone and social media has become the norm. We can instantly ping travel photos over Whatsapp, get multiple 'likes' for envy-inducing snaps of gorgeous beaches on Instagram, impress followers with selfies of us diving in tropical reefs or dangling off cliff edges. But aren't we missing a trick? Unplugging can be as easy as taking a paper map out when hiking or ditching Google recommendations in favour of asking a local.

When we obsess over recording every second of our travels with our smartphones, we are in danger of letting the true spirit of a place pass us by. And surely finding that spirit is why we travel in the first place. So it's important to know when to leave the smartphone behind. Trust us, it can be liberating.

The effects of smartphone overuse are well documented, with studies showing higher levels of loneliness, depression and anxiety. When you travel, this might translate as interacting online rather than face-to-face, thereby missing out on cultural insights, new friendships and one-of-a-kind wildlife encounters. And there are more creative ways to remember your travels, should you so wish: from sketching to letter writing or keeping a travel diary – telling rather than showing.



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Travel Goals

BEGINNER: PUT YOUR PHONE AWAY

If you walked into a hostel a decade ago, you'd have found a sociable group of travellers trading tales and tips. You went to cafes to strike up conversations, markets to haggle and try unfamiliar foods, and stopped people in the street to ask for directions. Then came the smartphone. Switching it off now can rewind time and help you connect with others.

HOW Though a few cafes out there are now laptop-free zones – Dough Lover (www.doughlover.com) in Brighton, England, to name just one – hotels have been slower to embrace the trend. But you can exert control by allotting yourself a specific time to check your phone each day, and otherwise disconnecting.

ADVANCED: DISCONNECT COMPLETELY

Taking a break from technology can have a calming effect and help us reconnect with our physical and spiritual selves. Ditch the phone and book into a tech-free retreat for a day, week or month – be it a yoga and meditation retreat in Thailand, an Ayurveda escape in India, or a stress-busting spa by the sea. The longer the stay, the more powerful the effect.

HOW Kerala's Ayurveda retreats set a glowing example when it comes to non-tech environments. Boutique-style, riverside Mekosha (www.mekosha.com) near Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum) has banned wi-fi in the rooms and dining areas, and phones are only permitted in a designated area.

ADVANCED: GO REMOTE

One way to kick-start a digital detox is to remove yourself completely from the source by travelling to a remote place with no signal or wi-fi, be it an island in Indonesia, a national park in the Australian outback, or a multiday hike in the Alps. In wild places, it's easier to engage the senses, whether wildlife spotting, sleeping under the stars or foraging – anything, essentially, that deepens your connection with nature.

HOW Embark on a multiday hike where the signal is sketchy: starting and ending in Chamonix, the 106 mile (170km), 11-day Tour du Mont Blanc is an epic choice in the Alps, dipping into France, Switzerland and Italy, with hut accommodation offering shared meals. Book ahead in summer.

A screen love affair

Most of us spend more time on our phones than we realise (or care to admit), with the average user checking updates every 15 minutes, but when do we cross the fine line to addiction? If recent neuroscience studies are to be believed, we're not so much addicted to smartphones as we are to the human impulse to interact with others, making us 'hypersocial' rather than 'antisocial'. To not be online leaves us with raging FOMO (fear of missing out).

But the dangers of overuse are becoming apparent, with everything from low mood and anxiety (driven by the reward system) to decreased focus and physiological symptoms like increased heart rate and blood pressure cited. The solution, it seems, is restraint, with neuroscientists suggesting ways to curb phone addiction and reinforce better digital habits, from turning off push notifications and allotting time slots for checking social media to banning phones from the bedroom – all simple means of regaining control.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Be present and inspired:

Engage all your senses, p188

Practise with the best:

Meditate with masters p216

Left: Room at Mekosha, Kerala, India