

Traveler's Checks ... And Balances?

Going new places, seeing new sights, trying new things - travel broadens the mind. If you don't exercise when you travel, however, it broadens the hips too. When John and I were first married, we took lots of trips. Then came kids. Then came braces and camp and college funds. John and I still took trips, but they were a lot closer to home. They were guilt trips. Before we go on a trip John does extensive research. He reads material from the library, he buys books and he searches the internet. I on the other hand - the one holding the pre-addressed postcard labels - believe in learning through total immersion in whatever place we visit. I like to learn about a place by experiencing it with all five senses. Of course, learning from John's research is my sixth sense - my good sense. Having a generic packing list on my computer is good sense. I check off what I need and then type in how much I'll need. Prescriptions, reading glasses, special pillow - each year the list gets longer. Last year I added "list" to the list. Otherwise, I'd forget to bring all the stuff home. Whether traveling in another city or another country, I don't understand why people stay at chain hotels or eat in chain restaurants. I want to experience local establishments for better, for worse - and for bugs. When we traveled in rural Africa, I was continually bitten by bugs. When I told a hotel clerk that my spray wasn't working, he said he had something better for getting rid of bugs. Then he brought a three-foot-long reptile to our room. Suddenly, I didn't think bugs were a problem. When we travel with my mother-in-law, she encourages us to eat things we don't eat at home. Because my mother-in-law is an accomplished cook, eating something different can be a challenge for her. It's not a challenge for me. In fact, it's against the law for restaurants to serve leftovers. Food is one of the many things I write about in the postcards I send to family and friend. I also send a bland postcard to myself. One or two weeks after I'm home it's nice to receive a reminder I'd been away Tribal masks, wooden shoes, bullfighting posters - souvenirs are reminders I'd been away. Memories can be souvenirs too. Memories are souvenirs that don't end up at garage sales.

About the Author

Knight Pierce Hirst takes humorous looks at life. Take a minute to make yourself smile at <http://knightwatch.typepad.com>

Source: <http://americanahost.com>