

The Health Benefits of Taking Vacations

Can it be true that something we love so dearly, yet rarely partake in, can have such health benefits as taking a vacation does?

Hilaire Belloc once wrote: "I have wandered all my life, and I have also traveled; the difference between the two being this, that we wander for distraction, but we travel for fulfillment."

As it turns out, we benefit greatly in many aspects of our lives by wandering, *and* traveling.



The Benefits of Vacations

The U.S. Travel Association distributed a white-paper on the personal benefits of travel and taking a vacation entitled: [*The Benefits are Everywhere*](#), which summarized findings by no less than 30 health and wellness experts. One stat that truly stands out is the fact that an annual vacation can cut a person's risk of heart attack by 50 percent!¹

And, vacations are good for our proverbial hearts too. A study by Marshfield Clinic, and posted in the Wisconsin Medical Journal states that female frequent vacationers are more satisfied with their marriages.²



How many of us have had that feeling of euphoria as we prepare to depart on a dream vacation – well, after we pass through airport security, of course. We don't stop to think

about the science of endorphins, or mental rejuvenation that's about to affect us in ways that only the act of falling in love, or eating chocolate comes close to.

Yet who among us will doubt the positive psychogenic effect of laying on a hammock on a quiet beach in Punta Cana overlooking crystal azure water, versus laying on a sofa at your local psychologist's office.

Time Away Increases Productivity

At a recent Employee Health Benefit Fair for a Fortune 500 company, an employee was overheard saying that he had not taken a vacation in 17 years. Ouch!

Spending time away from work is not frowned upon by executives, yet more than 40% of Americans did not take any vacation days in 2014³, let alone a full week away.



It's OK, we can take a vacation and survive the email inbox barrage. In fact, we just might find that 90% of those emails aren't very important after all. Chances are, the benefits of stimulated creativity, enhanced motivation and increased productivity will far outweigh a day full of clearing a heap of emails and phone messages.

More than 33% of small-business owners find that the most productive ideas that lead to growth came during downtime, not in the office according to a study by American Express.⁴

Affordable Travel

As we've covered, vacations are good for our health, and good for our romantic lives, but what about our financial health. Vacations are expensive, right?

Despite the consolidation of online travel agencies (Expedia and Priceline Group dominate more than 80% of the OTA landscape), there are alternatives to these retail industry models that can provide savings beyond what the so-called discount websites offer.

Travel Clubs offer savings to their members by not having to abide by rate-parity clauses that accompany hotel contracts due to a login-protected platform. Also, because specific rates cannot be advertised, the online clubs are able to pass along the savings to members.

One such website, www.LMTclub.com has more than 600,000 members that register for a small fee, and save hundreds over popular comparison travel websites or hotel booking sites.

The screenshot displays the LMT Club website. At the top left is the logo for 'lastminute travel LMT CLUB'. To the right is the tagline 'Giving your wallet a vacation' and the slogan 'Your Destination, Your Schedule, Spectacular Savings'. Below the logo is a navigation menu with buttons for 'home', 'hotels', 'flights', 'cruises', 'cars', 'packages', 'activities', 'deals', 'vacation homes', and 'my account'. A user is logged in as 'james@lmtclub.com' with 2,535 available TripleDip points to redeem. The main content area features a 'Search Members-Only Rate' section with a list of destinations including Amsterdam, Anaheim, Bali, Bangkok, Barcelona, Berlin, Chicago, Dubai, Florence, Hong Kong, Las Vegas, Lisbon, London, Los Angeles, Miami, Montreal, New York, Orlando, Paris, Prague, Rome, San Diego, San Francisco, and Washington. An 'Other' search box is also present. To the right are two promotional banners: one for 'How do you picture your Summer Vacation?' offering up to 35% off on hotels in sunny destinations, and another for 'Doubletree Metropolitan by Hilton' located on Lexington Avenue and 51st Street in Manhattan, with a starting price of '\$48'.

Travel agents (yes, there are still travel agents in America), can give valuable tips and deals, and be sure to check with employer's benefit partners for discounts that may be exclusive to employees.

American Travel Habits

If it's true that there is a validated, positive correlation between taking vacations and intellectual functioning among women from 65 to 92, does that make American Female Baby boomers some of the world's smartest?

About 32 million single American women travel each year, and women are responsible for approximately 80% of all travel purchasing decisions – regardless of who is traveling with them, or who pays for the trip. Mature travelers make up 36% of leisure travel volume from the United States, and half of those are aged 65-plus.

Though Americans spend some of the most money on international travel, the U.S. ranks dead last of 17 developed nations when it comes to health rankings⁵ – could it be that abysmally low paid-time-off participation rate?



According to a special report in September by Boxever, 31.3 percent of Americans say they won't take a vacation because they can't afford it, and another 30.2% claim they are too busy!

Chief Marketing Officer for Tourico Holidays, Amir Kalmar may have said it best: "More and more people are traveling like never before. People 55 and up dedicate large sums of money and time on traveling, enriching their lives through fulfilling experiences. This keeps them happy, active, and looking forward to their next trip."

Preparing for Risk Factors

With \$83.5 Billion spent on international travel in 2013 (behind Germany at \$83.8B, and China at \$102B), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) commits 3 full pages on the cdc.gov site to traveler's health.

Find updates on topics such as vaccines, malaria and hepatitis prevention, as well as tips for travelers and clinicians alike.



Fun Travel Statistics

So the next time we see passengers donned in sunglasses and ridiculous flamingo shirts and flip flops on that flight to Florida, give them a knowing nod to their health. Feel free to share these fun facts associated with travel vacations that are sure to add to positive endorphin flow:

- Blood pressure, heart rate, and levels of epinephrine – a stress hormone – decline on holidays of only one or two days.
- Middle-aged men at high risk for coronary heart disease who take frequent annual vacations are 21% less likely to die of any cause and 32% less likely to die of their coronary heart disease.
- There are long-term health benefits of using travel as a coping mechanism during stressful times.
- At least four out of ten travelers feel more romantic on vacation
- Over half of employed Americans say they come back feeling reconnected with their family after vacation
- Life satisfaction increases during vacation, and these effects continue after returning home

- Travelers experience a 25% increase in performance on vigilance tests after returning from vacation – travelers 45 or older show a 50% increase in performance.

¹ Allerton, H. E. (2003) Not Funny Ha Ha Funny peculiar. T+D; Vol. 57 Issue 12, p87-88, 2p

² Marshfield Clinic. (UNKNOWN).UNKNOWN. Wisconsin Medical Journal.

³ Ali, R. (January 25, 2015) Travel Habits of Americans: 42 Percent Didn't Take Any Vacation Days in 2014.

<http://www.skift.com>

⁴ Ewers, J. E. (2007). All Work and No Play Makes a Company... Unproductive. U.S. News & World Report, 00415537, 8/13/2007, Vol. 143, Issue 5 The Benefits of Travel – 2008

⁵ Woolf, S.H. & Aron, L. (2013) U.S. Health in International Perspective. *National Research Council and Institute of Medicine*

Last Minute Travel Club is Powered by Tourico Holidays, Inc., America's largest wholesale travel company in business for more than 20 years, and offices in 35 worldwide cities.