

PURSUING THE TRAVEL LIFESTYLE WITH DAVE LEVART

1st October 2013 / *Experts* / 1 comment

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Dave Levart, of [Dave's Travel Corner](#) (where we see the world one step at a time!), took a moment out of his day to answer some of my admittedly nosy questions.

I've virtually met (e-met?) other people who are, like Dave, direct and concise in their emails. It's really a pleasant change of pace from long-winded, empty emails that end in, "but I don't want to take responsibility for *that*." In more direct exchanges I'm usually impressed by the person's audacity of choice. Dave's emails suggest that his personality is one where he chooses a road and then puts on his backpack, rather than sitting back and waiting for the road to come to him.

Overall I was surprised by the insight David gives into the mindset of a traveller. I hope that you will also find some of the answers to your questions about pursuing the travel lifestyle.

Without further ado...

You write, "I began Dave's Travel Corner in late 1996 as a result of of a life-changing trip to Nepal in which I trekked near Everest Base Camp." That story is colorful and a bit scary. But it doesn't mention how or why you decided to go on the trip in the first place. Could you fill me in on that?

I was walking through the Student Union at my college, Cal Poly San in Luis Obispo, California, when I spotted a flyer in the window boasting intriguing experiences in Nepal. A color photograph on this flyer showed massive jagged mountains and described trekking to the Everest Base Camp followed by an exhilarating three-day rafting and camping trip down one of Nepal's wild rivers.

I was captivated by both. The phone call I made to the number listed on that flyer was one of the best phone calls I've ever made. I was ready for some adventure, having gotten just a taste of it during my only other trips outside of the country prior to this – to Western Canada and Costa Rica. Plus the price was right – it was being heavily subsidized by the university.

When you first started travelling, what were the first trips you took, and why did you choose to go there instead of somewhere else? Did you have any preconceptions about those places and what happened to your view on them once you'd been there?

The first trip outside of the country was to British Columbia and Alberta in Western Canada with my family. I was still young; this trip was chosen based on its location and relatively reasonably priced flights from where we lived in California. Not to mention my parents both enjoy beautiful natural scenery. I was still young so didn't really have any preconceived notions about this trip, other than it still vividly stands out in my mind as a gorgeous part of the world to visit.

My second trip outside of the country was to Costa Rica. Costa Rica is well set up for tourism and is a good choice for travellers who have not journeyed much in Central America. It is safe and easy to get around, plus it offers plenty of natural beauty. This trip was also with a college class. I had so little international travel experience at this point that I can remember being super excited weeks before the trip. And in the days leading up to the departure date I was so hyped I could barely sleep.

I also remember being nervous prior to the trip – worried about tropical diseases and wildlife. I had so many questions for the professor. Even though he had been going to Costa Rica for many years, his answers only partially alleviated my concerns. One actually has to travel to experience the realities of certain areas, and it wasn't scary at all when we were there. I did make a travel rookie mistake of dropping my passport in the parking lot at one of our first stops after we landed. Fortunately my professor discovered it.

My dad started travelling after he retired. I hate “travelling” but I love living in foreign countries. A friend of mine “got it out of his system” and started a business when he came back. What’s your mindset in regards to travelling? What kind of traveller are you?

I am a traveller that seeks experiences. I am also a traveller that believes in the power of now – not waiting – exploring what you love while you are healthy. Even visiting 25 to 30 countries over the past few years has not tempered my desire to travel. I still become excited right before a trip, although certainly not to the point of nervousness like my first few trips.

I am a lightweight traveller. If I can't carry my entire travel belongings in one bag onto the plane then I am carrying too much. I often travel with just a small school-size backpack. In colder climates, I have ways to keep the pack light, yet still bring warm gear. Here is [my packlist](#) that I've created after years of travelling abroad.

I poked around your older posts. Here's a quote from the second post you wrote on your blog, titled [Peru 05](#):

“Peru trip was incredible. High mountains, steamy jungles, dry deserts and the ocean – all in one country. Can't wait to return and next time will visit the high Altiplano of Bolivia and parts of the Patagonia.

“Article about Iquitos finished but won't be posted on the main page for a few months as there are other articles currently queued.”

Compare that to the much more recent [Exploring the Quito Surroundings](#), which is much longer, more emotive and makes a simple trip very exciting:

“Heading up – high up – we grabbed the tram car at Teleferico, one of the world's longest and highest tram cars. In about 15 minutes we were at 4100 meters. The trail leads from the tram high up into the mountains – I hiked above 4,200 feet. I've had such bad altitude sickness at this elevation in the past, that it is a great feeling when I feel ‘normal’ at these altitudes.”

Looking back, what made you commit so much more to the writing? What are the big differences between now and when you started?

In 2005 I was tentatively playing with official “blogging” software, making half-hearted attempts to test out the software I was using at that time. I think it was a software called TypePad which is still around but never really took off to the extent that WordPress did. Prior to that I had been writing “guides” on my site – more how to, where to go, what to do, etc. Not a blogging format. That is a different style of writing than “blogging.” I also wanted to create more of a community and to do so I knew I needed additional content and additional sections of the site.

When I first started writing online for my site in 1996 (I had a personal site even before that), the Internet was much different. Connections were extremely slow, which limited the type of content and size of files you could place online. How you updated and placed content also was much more difficult. Initially I used an antiquated program called Front Page and also uploaded files through FTP. Then the blogging world took off and software became very sophisticated on its own with additional plugins and add-ons. A technical savvy mind certainly still helps working with all this software technology, but a building a general blog is now rather easy compared to the “early” days.

Do you ever feel self-conscious about your writing, the topics you’re covering or any other aspect of your website? How have you dealt with doubts in the past or right now?

I began the site because I loved to write and then eventually discovered my love of international travel and combined the two. So at its core I began the site as a creative personal outlet. I write for myself but also to help others, and that was the focus of the original content of the site – the “guide” section.

I never had any doubts about what I was doing as far as writing (although I like to think 16-plus years later my quality of writing has certainly improved). Much later in the evolution of the site, advertisers became interested in promoting their own businesses and at that point the only doubts were what price to charge and could I deliver traffic and quality of viewers so that they would renew. After many transactions I’ve learned to overcome these particular doubts.

Wine writing was particularly challenging. I started another project in the Napa Valley in California with no background on writing about wine – how to taste it from a technical and critiquing perspective, how to smell it, what I should be looking for, etc. There were lots of doubts initially, but if you plow forward you eventually learn some things: Talk to those who do this for a living professionally and meet others in the industry for additional education. I could have taken a class on this but some part of me said just learn by the trials of “doing.”

I noticed that you **interview a lot of fellow travellers. What do their experiences give you? Inspiration? Advice? And do you have any favorite travellers whom you’d recommend?**

I think you should be helping me ask some of my interview questions based on the good depth of your own questions! *[Here the editor smiled and shared the piece with his co-workers.]*

I like the perspective that the interviews bring to our site. It's a crosscut of those in the lifestyle, entertainment and travel industry. I want our readers to also see that travel isn't scary and I want them to be inspired by some of the experiences that these interviewees share from their own travels. Plus it is a good way to gain insights from accomplished individuals doing what they love to do.

- I like the quality of content that Jim Benning brings to [World Hum](#).
- There are a number of extremely well-travelled individuals on the planet. [Lee Abbamonte](#) is one of the more recognizable faces of this select group, having visited all the countries in the world and he's not even yet 40 years old.
- I love following the adventures of [Robert Pelton Young](#).

What books, articles, newspapers, photo galleries or other media would you recommend to someone who was in love with the idea of travelling but is full of excuses that keeps them stuck at their day jobs?

Ahh you mean armchair travellers? And, besides the Dave's Travel Corner International community?! The amount of online travel resources is overwhelming these days: Major search engines often only list major travel sites and plenty of the good ones with personal perspectives seemed to get buried among all the other sites out there.

- There are thousands of domain.com English written travel blogs these days. We've spent hours combing the web for these; [my list of about 2500 active ones](#) should keep one busy for days.
- [Travel Pod](#) is one of the original blogging platforms. They host many blogs for travellers – some featured ones are [here](#).
- [BootsnAll](#) is one of the original travel communities on the web focusing on independent travel.
- [Travel Mindset](#) is a relatively new addition to the travel writing community. I became involved with them fairly early on; they feature quality content, curated as themes, from a number of travel writers.

I was reading Stephen King's *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, where he mentions that among all of the questions people ask him about his art, they never ask the ones that matter the most to him. What question is that to you? What do people never ask, that's important, and what's your answer to that question?

How do you measure success in your line of work?

This of course, can be different for each person. However, this line of work is a lifestyle. If you are more interested in things and or money there are better jobs out there. I measure success a number of ways as it relates to my travels and travel site. Pursuing something that you are passionate about and sticking with it and seeing it grow – whether it is income, the number of visitors or other opportunities that result – is certainly success.

Creating and building an outlet and a brand that both benefits me and helps others in regards to travel decisions certainly is one of my other measures of success.

If you liked this you can check out our next *interview with Kimberly Fisher!*

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I'm a bit of an armchair traveller at the moment, though I've been through Europe and lived almost two years in various cities in China. My marketing profession lets me keep my feet planted in lots of awesome industries, travel being one of my favourite.