

Embracing *Slow Travel*



By Chris

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I am, by any reasonable definition, an aviation geek. I have loved airports, aircraft and the mechanics of flight for as long as I can remember. As a child, it was the plane itself; as an adult, it became the elegance of getting somewhere efficiently. So, my wholehearted embrace of slow travel has surprised not only those around me, but me as well.

What began as a practical exercise - mapping routes, testing connections and seeing if a journey could be done differently - quietly turned into a passion. Looking back, perhaps it shouldn't have been such a revelation. I have always enjoyed the journey as much as the destination. Slow travel simply stretches and enriches that part of the experience, turning transit time into something to savour rather than something to endure.

The real shift came after the Covid lockdowns. Like many people, I suddenly had greater flexibility in how and where I worked. Travel time no longer felt “lost”. I could work from a station café, a ferry lounge, a hotel room or apartment between trains. Once travel stopped being something that interrupted life and instead became part of it, the possibilities opened up.

What I love most is the planning. Sitting with a map - a real one, not just Google Maps - tracing routes and imagining where I might stop along the way. A three-hour gap between trains becomes a self-guided walking tour of Rome at dawn, before the city stirs. A ferry journey between islands turns into an unexpected conversation, conducted in broken phrases, hand gestures and the occasional assist from Google Translate. There are small, human moments too - a haircut in a Turkish barbershop in Milan, or the best pizza I've ever eaten from a mobile oven on a street corner in Bologna.

Perhaps these are the kinds of experiences I might have had backpacking in my late teens or early twenties. I went straight into work at seventeen and never took a gap year. Back then, I was shy and awkward, and I suspect I would have travelled differently - more inwardly, less openly. Slow travel, later in life, has given me the confidence and the space to connect with strangers in a way I might not have done before.

There are also simple, practical pleasures. Train stations, bus terminals and ferry ports tend to sit at the heart of towns and cities. You step off and you're immediately there, not navigating long transfers, early check-ins or anonymous terminals on the outskirts. Recently, a landslide blocked the direct rail route between Paris and Milan, forcing a detour via Zurich. Switzerland had never been on my list. That accidental journey changed everything. It is now one of my favourite countries, a place I return to and quietly think of as a happy place. Slow travel has a way of rewarding detours.

Travel, for me, has always been about connection. I fell in love with Greece on my first visit because of the people - the depth of conversation, the generosity, the genuine curiosity about who you are. Slow travel has multiplied those moments. When you move through places at a human pace, connections form more easily. You linger. You notice. You talk.

There is a particular pleasure in looking at a journey and choosing the longer line on the map. Flying somewhere in three hours or travelling overland in two days are very different propositions. These days, I get excited about the latter - about night trains and sleeper buses, going to bed in one country and waking up in another. Modern night trains, with comfortable sleeping carriages and private pods, have transformed what is possible, and reopened routes that had long been forgotten. Ferries, once dismissed as a budget alternative to flying, are firmly back in my travel kit. Spending twenty-four hours at sea now feels like a gift, not a compromise.

Slow travel doesn't have to mean one thing. It can be a joyful challenge - getting from A to B as efficiently as possible overland - or a leisurely meander, with no real concern for time. It doesn't even require a fixed destination. And it certainly doesn't demand perfection. You don't have to commit to a no-fly holiday to begin with. Travel one way slowly and fly back. Choose one leg of a journey to do differently. Even a small shift can change how travel feels.

While slow travel is often associated with more responsible ways of moving through the world, for me it has been about something deeper. It has reshaped how I experience places, people and time itself. It has reminded me that the joy of travel doesn't only lie in where you end up, but in everything that happens along the way.



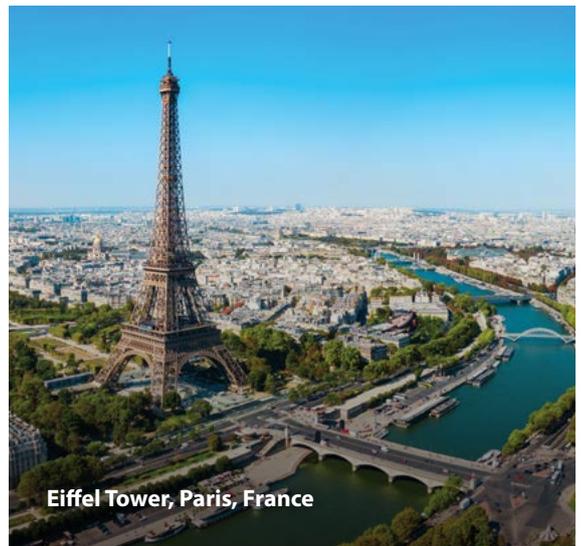
Breakfast in Italy



Sivota, Greece



Girona, Spain



Eiffel Tower, Paris, France

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