

BEYOND ESCAPE

Reclaiming The Soul Of Travel

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*Long Before Travel Became Leisure, It Was A Sacred Crossing –
A Covenant Of Becoming.*

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I. THE SPIRIT WE FORGOT

Once, travel was not a pastime.

It was a pilgrimage. A covenant. A calling.

To journey across land or sea was to risk the self for the sake of becoming.

We traveled to survive, to worship, to learn, to evolve.

Discovery was sacred. Discernment was expected.

Today, travel is easier, faster, and louder – but not always deeper.

We have crossed the world a thousand times and forgotten to cross into ourselves.

The ancient spirit of travel is not gone – only sleeping.

And if we are willing, we can wake it again.

II. DISCOVERY AND DISCERNMENT: THE ANCIENT SPIRIT

Travel was once an act of reverence – a sacred crossing between what was known and what was waiting to be known.

In ancient times, movement was slow, dangerous, and transformational.

To discover new land, a new people, or a new wisdom was to be reshaped forever.

You did not consume new worlds; you were consumed by them – humbled, expanded, reoriented.

"To journey was to become more human, not more entertained."

Discernment was the traveler's duty:

to know what to carry home and what to leave behind.

To recognize that not every sight was meant for ownership, not every land for conquest, not every ritual for mimicry.

Travel was an act of stewardship: of self, of soil, of soul.

But what happens when movement is divorced from meaning?

When we stretch, root, and flee – without discernment?

III. THE THREE MODERN SPIRITS OF TRAVEL

Today, the spirit of travel has fragmented into three familiar paths:

1. TRAVEL TO GROW BRANCHES

We stretch outward into new experiences — eager to see, taste, and gather more.

There is beauty here: curiosity, wonder, adventure.

But without discernment, expansion becomes collection.

We accumulate sights without wisdom.

We stretch outward but remain shallow.

"Branches without roots cannot bear fruit."

In cities like **Venice** and **Barcelona**, the daily tide of tourists has outnumbered residents — turning once-living communities into open-air museums, where authentic life recedes and curated spectacle replaces it.

In cultural destinations across Africa, "experience packages" like Maasai "villages" simulate traditional life for safari-goers — blending genuine heritage with performative expectation.

The sacred becomes spectacle.

The unknown becomes entertainment.

The traveler sees everything — but integrates almost nothing.

2. TRAVEL TO GROW ROOTS

We journey backward, seeking ancestral soil — the places our blood remembers but our bodies do not.

There is longing here: for belonging, for memory, for meaning.

But without relationship, roots become relics.

We visit graves we cannot pray over, walk streets we cannot name, touch stones that do not know our hands.

In the rolling hills of **County Kerry, Ireland**, entire villages welcome waves of American tourists tracing Irish ancestry through DNA tests — heartfelt visitors longing for a connection deeper than

maps can give.

The soil is willing, but roots, once severed, must be regrown patiently.

Touching ground does not transplant a soul.

Belonging must be cultivated, not consumed.

3. TRAVEL TO ESCAPE

We flee — from boredom, from responsibility, from grief we cannot yet name.

There is pain here: the ache for relief, the desire for distance.

But without soul, escape becomes forgetting.

We trade one view for another, one rush for another, but the unrest follows us.

"Movement without meaning does not heal. It only exhausts."

Across the beaches of **Bali**, **Cancún**, and **Phuket**, massive resort zones have grown — offering temporary paradises where local communities are displaced, sacred coastlines privatized, and visitors are insulated from the true spirit of place.

In the growing digital nomad hubs of **Lisbon** and **Chiang Mai**, whole neighborhoods transform to serve a transient population — one always seeking a fresh start, rarely rooting deeply.

The body moves.

The soul stays restless.

IV. THE CAUSES BENEATH THE DRIFT

This fragmentation of travel did not happen by accident.

Migration severed ties to land and story.

Generations uprooted by necessity lost living memory of home.

Modern life overstimulated and alienated us.

Disconnected from place, tradition, and purpose, we began to seek elsewhere for what could only be tended within.

The commercialization of travel sold movement, not meaning.

Journeys became packages, checklists, commodities.

And most quietly, we forgot the sacred duty of stewardship — the call to move through the world with humility, gratitude, and reverence.

Without memory of travel's deeper purpose, we drifted — faster, farther, emptier.

V. THE UNSEEN COST: WHAT TRAVEL DOES TO THE JOURNEYED

We did not drift alone.

In our rush to branch, root, and escape, we left footprints on places and people we scarcely see.

Branches tourism commodified culture.

Roots tourism placed emotional burdens on communities.

Escape tourism exploited land and people for transient comfort.

Locals in Venice protest cruise ships that tower over ancient canals.

Villages in Ireland recalibrate their calendars around ancestral tourists.

Coastal towns from Thailand to Mexico reshape their economies, losing self-sufficiency to serve the stranger's dream of paradise.

"When we forget the soul of travel, we participate in the forgetting of others."

The sacred becomes spectacle.

The home becomes backdrop.

The land becomes product.

If we are to travel wisely,
we must reclaim more than our own spirit —
we must honor the spirit of the places we touch.

VI. BEYOND ESCAPE: TRAVELING WITH SOUL

The path back is not complicated.
It begins, as it once did, with reverence.

To reclaim the soul of travel, we must remember:
Every journey is a covenant.

We are guests — not consumers.
We are stewards — not owners.
We are pilgrims — not tourists.

Traveling with soul means:

- Moving with humility.
- Receiving with gratitude.
- Listening before speaking.
- Giving before taking.
- Leaving lighter footprints — and deeper reverence.

On the ancient **Camino de Santiago**, pilgrims move step by step not to conquer terrain, but to be reshaped by it — each mile a silent surrender to the mystery of what will be revealed.

Before every journey, we must ask:

- Am I traveling to perform, or to transform?
- Am I reaching for souvenirs, or for wisdom?
- Am I fleeing, or becoming?

VII. THE JOURNEY AHEAD

We do not need more travelers.

We need more pilgrims.

Pilgrims who understand that every crossing of land is also a crossing of soul.

Pilgrims who know that to move outward must mean to move inward, too.

Pilgrims who carry respect as their passport and discernment as their compass.

The ancient spirit is not lost.

It waits – in the quiet places, in the humbled heart, in the open hand.

When we travel with soul, we do not merely escape life.

We enter it more fully.

And in doing so,

we awaken,

we return,

we lead –

first ourselves, then others.

Beyond escape.

Back into life.