

TRAVEL

Slow Travel: A Thumbprint On The Soul

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Chairs by a lake lend themselves perfectly to doing nothing. COURTESY OF ARAMARK DESTINATIONS

When some think of slow travel, they imagine a train which keeps stopping, a car stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic or a plane delayed countless hours. That's one kind of slow travel. But there's a much more fulfilling kind: travel in which you don't jump from attraction to attraction or city to city; travel where you stroll, meander, and wander at snail's pace to take in your surroundings.

"Slow Travel involves longer stays at a single location to gain a deeper more meaningful experience of the destination, or choosing a leisure travel experience that explores a new location nearby your home to avoid the cost and carbon emissions of air travel," says Says Chris Kam, President and COO of [Omnitrak Group Inc.](#)



Magnolia trees at The New York Botanical Garden THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

For slow travel close to home, you could visit a beautiful garden such as the New York Botanical Garden (especially with the Cherry trees and Magnolias in full bloom) or find a flowering tree on your own street or nearby park. Observe the color and fragrance of the blossoms and pause to fully appreciate them.



A young man with a wicker basket full of vegetables freshly collected in an organic orchard. GETTY

“Slow travel allows you to soak in the present moment while remaining sustainable for local communities, preserving regional cuisine while supporting local farming and eating local food,” says Raymond Bickson, [Bickson Hospitality Group](#), New York. “This is travel that leaves a thumbprint on the soul for the traveler.” Slow travel began with the slow food movement in which people began to enjoy food which was good for them, good for the growers, and good for the planet.

“One of the few positive results that the Covid pandemic brought to the travel industry was the emergence of slow travel,” says Martin Rapp, Senior Vice President Leisure at [Altour](#). “After two years of being at home and isolated from loved ones, people are, instead of rushing from city to city cramming each day full of sightseeing, now spending time traveling leisurely, getting to know their families, and bonding through shared experiences from cooking lessons by a local chef or biking on country roads, to volunteering in a South African school. Everyone is looking for connections to each other and this can only be achieved by taking time.”



Two riders slowly enjoying a gently cycling trip with [Ciclismo Classico](#). DAVE KRAUS

Lauren Hefferon, Director and Founder of [Ciclismo Classico Bicycle Tours](#) says, “Some cyclists want to go as fast as possible, but there’s also the *bicycle traveler* who rides around the world slowly on two wheels knowing a bike ride is meditation in motion, I call it ‘Zen and the Art of Bicycle Travel.’ Just slow down, enjoy every single moment, and connect with the poetry of pedaling rather than chasing the pain of performance.”



View of the sunset from the Ojai Valley Inn OJAI VALLEY INN

Many travelers come to a spa such as the **Ojai Valley Inn** in California to take as many fitness classes as possible. But this 220-acre resort has lush oak and olive tree-studded pathways, sprawling wild sage and lavender, fresh citrus groves, and an expansive garden. “There’s a sense of calm and serenity at Ojai Valley Inn,” says Chris Kandziora, the resort’s SVP of Sales & Marketing. “It’s our mission to provide a luxurious respite. We offer daily fitness classes, but we also invite guests to embrace our natural surroundings. Slow tourism is an opportunity for guests to relax, recharge, and connect with the unrivaled beauty of the Ojai Valley.”



A Road Trip through a Tropical Forest GETTY

Even driving can become a relaxing activity. Says Cecil Morton, President & CEO of [HoloHolo](#), a rideshare company in Hawaii, “Here’s what I’ve learned about taking it slow. The best kept secret for an island-bound traveler is to take the long way around any island from the comfy back seat of a car with a local driver. Plus, you get local advice on where to shop, stop, sightsee and go gently.”



Quinault Rainforest Spring Colors by the Olympic Mountains COURTESY OF ARAMARK
DESTINATIONS

Backpacking is another way to travel at a slow pace, particularly popular at Olympic National Park and Forest, where much of the park's interior is accessible only by trail. Those who don't want to hike can drive to the southwest end of the Olympic National Forest to the Quinault Valley, known as the “Valley of the Giants.” Here, the champion trees are recognized as the largest living individuals of their species. Nearby [Lake Quinault Lodge](#) offers luxury but with no TVs, phones or WIFI.



The Quinal Rainforest Road COURTESY OF ARAMARK DESTINATIONS

Maine is a perfect place to connect with local people, culture, and food — the opposite of mass tourism. One ideal place is [Monhegan Island](#), an artist's colony scarcely a mile square and ten miles from the nearest mainland. In the village, visitors can get to know the locals, and wander around without racing to the next place. Accessible only by boat, Monhegan is primarily a walking and fishing village where lobster traps line the unpaved roads. Nine miles of hiking trails lead to the highest ocean cliffs on the Maine coastline.



Lobster traps on Monhegan Island, Maine VISIT MAINE

“Slow tourism emphasizes a deeper connection with the places we visit,” says Paul Melhus, CEO and Founder of [ToursByLocals](#), connecting travelers with locals in 190 countries for customizable off-the-beaten track private tours. “We’ve noticed in 2021 and into 2022 that in places visitors may not typically look for help exploring, they now want guides to help them experience it in a different, more meaningful way. They want to connect more with local culture, food, music, and landscape, even in their own backyards. Traveling slowly and mindfully by visiting lesser-known places with fewer travelers has a more significant impact on the local economy and a less significant impact on the environment.”

If you prefer to visit a popular city while keeping slow tourism in mind, consider booking during the low or shoulder season. It’s a much better experience for both the traveler and the people who live there.



Montpelier, Vermont at twilight. GETTY

And while slow travel is not a new trend, it’s experiencing a surge in popularity. Since Covid, many have rethought their relationship with travel; they want to slow down and fully appreciate a new place. So whether you chose a less-known city such as Montpelier instead of Stowe, Vermont or the Olympic Forest in place of Yellowstone, to fully enjoy it, travel slowly.



Daffodils in full boom at The New York Botanical Garden THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

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Margie Goldsmith, 2021 Lowell Thomas journalist of the year, has won 96 writing awards including the Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Gold Award. She is a contributing feature writer... **Read More**