The Road Less Travelled

I have heard it said that travel broadens the mind. If that’s the case, then my mind is as broad as it is likely to get. I have reached that stage where travel, in my case on holiday, is no longer worth the time, pain and frustration just to spend a few days, a week, perhaps two weeks, in some distant town or on some distant shore, chasing the sun or just seeing what it’s like over there.

The truth is that when you are of a certain age, in my case 65, it doesn’t matter so much where you are but who you are with and what you are doing. I’m talking about being able to switch off, forget about the pressures of life and chill out, and I no longer need to travel a few hundred or thousands miles up in the air or on the ocean waves to do that.

In fact doing that is more likely to have the opposite effect. I may be relieved at eventually getting there but I’ve still got to go through the grind of getting back. Most of us are glad to get back to the comforts of home after a holiday so I know I am not alone here.

My increasing intolerance of travelling was brought home to me recently when I set off on a cruise, spending a couple of days in Venice before joining the ship and a couple of days in Lido de Jessilo in Italy after leaving the ship and before setting off home. What seemed like a great idea started off with the usual grind of having to be at the airport the standard couple of hours before take-off, and moved on to the obligatory queuing up here, there and everywhere to get on and off planes and transfer taxis.

That was the good part. Even worse was realising just how noisy a ship can be, in particular the incessant, louder than necessary, conversations of other passengers of whom there seemed to be much more than the boat was capable of holding, as moving in amongst them reminded me of negotiating the terraces at a football match. Added to that was the obligatory DJ and fitness coaches circling the pool in competition with one another, as was their taste in music blasting out the banks of speakers surrounding the pool area. Chilling out did not seem to be an option.

Eating out was another issue, or should I say non-issue. Going out for dinner is an important part of a holiday for me now and trekking down stairs or waiting on a lift to get down or up to the restaurants on board did nothing for me. The food could not be faulted but eating in the same place or same couple of places every night did not feel like being on holiday.

Part of me thought that maybe it was the type of holiday that was the problem. A cruise is not for everyone. Whilst the food, drink and facilities are great, and you get to see different places, you are still stuck on a ship most of the time and travel many hours just to to get on it and on return to get back from it.

But even the thought of travelling to some sunny and exotic island just to sit and chill out seems hardly worth the effort after a certain age. If you put your mind to it you can find some chill out time at home. The weather may not be great most of the time but at least you are in control, have no bags to lug around and no one herding you around like cattle.

Worse still, if Boris has his way and we leave the EU without a deal then moving around for us Brit’s will be even harder. That’s why from now I intend to make the most of the time I have left and that’s does not include broadening my horizon by convincing myself a holiday abroad is just what I need.

Peace and tranquility can be found all around you, you just need to put a bit more effort into finding it. The road less travelled is the more quiet and peaceful one.

Tom Kelly

2 November 2019