

New Ways to Travel

Lecture Delivered
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This lecture is not called New Places to Travel, but rather New Ways to Travel.

By that I mean new ways to *think* about travel. Because how you view travel is how you *will* travel.

It also means looking at what travel can come to mean in your life, how you and your tastes and income can be at home with travel, and the many ways technology and demographics have changed travel in the past 10 years – and will change it even more in the next decade mainly for the better, but sometimes not.

Most of all, this is about how you can use travel to create a richer life. If a week on the beach every winter does that for you, terrific. But there's a world of other possibilities out there that I urge you to explore.

They're summed up in the words of [Cheryl Strayed](#) who at 26 thought she'd lost everything. Her mother's sudden death from cancer tore her family apart. Her marriage crumbled. She started taking drugs. With nothing to lose, she made a wild decision: to hike eleven hundred miles, from the Mojave Desert into Washington State, and to do it alone.

She then decided to write about her bizarre quest in a memoir entitled [WILD](#). That book went on to sell 10 million copies worldwide and became a hit movie.

"I decided to hike it for three months," she wrote, "because I thought it might heal my shattered heart and because walking was less expensive than driving or flying or taking a train. I would be a pilgrim travelling the ancient way."

"When I stood on the bridge that spans the Columbia River and marked the end of my 94 day trek at the border of Oregon and Washington, I was profoundly happy to be done, but I was also thinking more... more... more. Traveling at footspeed taught me a lot of things and one of them was about the meaning of travel itself. It was powerful and transformative and necessary. I wanted to know the endless misery and beauty of it. That fact was a fire in me that wouldn't go out. It was one I decided to feed forevermore."

My wife and I did something similar in 1992 We hiked a thousand miles of the [Appalachian Trail](#) from Georgia to Washington, DC. Different reasons, but the same effect. Travel has changed our lives and, in many ways, driven them. In fact, that trip was one of main reasons she IS my wife, but that's a story for another day.

That said, after the next hour, I hope that the same affliction strikes you.

It strikes a lot of people.

But do we travel just to go where we've never been? Yes, of course. Curiosity is in all 7.8 billion of us. Do we travel because we have the trifecta of the time, the money and the health to leave our familiar world for another? Yes, of course.

Do we travel to experience places and things, and even people, before they disappear from the onslaught of civilization? Yes, of course.

But more and more, we travel to find not 'it' or 'them', but ourselves.

More and more, we don't want to be tourists, but travelers. As G.K. Cheston said of the difference: "The traveler sees what he sees, the tourist sees what he has come to see."

Little wonder travel is now one of the biggest economic sectors in the world, bigger than food, bigger than finance. It accounts for one in 10 jobs and 10% of the world's GDP. Last year, tourism grew by 7% worldwide, the biggest rise in 10 years. This year, 156 million Chinese tourists will travel outside China, many of them for the first time. By 2030, China will overtake France to be the most popular holiday spot in the world, with the largest number of travelers coming to China...and leaving it.

But we don't need to wait 12 years to see experience tourism on an industrial scale. Today, the population of many cruise ships exceeds that of the ports they visit. Today, for every Venetian, 73.8 tourists are crowding into Venice, a city which last year had 20 million visitors; during the same 365 days, Canada, the second largest country on earth, had 21 million international visitors.

This has spawned a countervailing trend. One of the most successful hotels in the world has just 29 rooms and lies off the north coast of Newfoundland, on Fogo Island.

Even bigger than travel itself are the forces changing it. Huge social, political, geographic and demographic shifts make travel today much different than in the past. The Top 10 trends include wilderness seeking, extreme travel, luxury adventure, bucket list travel and of course...Cyberprestige.

What's that? The prestige gained on social media through sharing pictures of the cool places you've been to...Don't ask!

By far the most powerful of these forces is technology.

[Airbnb](#) barely existed 10 years ago. Instagram is a child of 8, and iPhones are just 11.

We should expect nothing less from technology and changing times to turn travel on its head in the five to 10 years to come. And since we're all going to take the rest of our trips in the future, it's best to learn the customs, language and vistas in that not-so-far-off land.

I'm assuming you're here partly because you like to travel. This *doesn't* make you typically Canadian. In fact, it makes you *unlike* most Canadians.

Only one in three of us actually takes our pretty minging two weeks a year vacation and nearly one in three takes some vacation but not two weeks. We're entitled to it. We get paid for it. We don't use it.

Why? An unhealthy work ethic. Guilt. Money, or lack of it – holidays cost money. Too much to do at home. Or maybe you dreamed of travel but never really got around to it. But as the Europeans – who get 4 to 6 weeks holidays a year – know, you will live longer, healthier and likely happier if you take more holidays, which means more travel.

Travel for us Canadians also means going outside to explore the great outdoors. After all, we have so much of it. It turns out that isn't really true either.

In September, a [Nature Conservancy of Canada](#) survey found that while 90% of Canadians feel happier and healthier when in nature, 75% of us find it much easier to stay inside and two thirds say we don't spend as much time outside as we once did. The survey listed four reasons: television, rain, snow and insects! We have what I call a Nature Deficit Disorder.

I saw a sign in a travel agency once that said: "Life is short. Death is long. Take a vacation."

What it lacked in subtlety, it made up in truth. The reason so many people I know don't travel as much as they can is that they just never get around to it. The days slip away. As Annie Dillard said: "How we spend our days is how we spend our lives."

Far too often, the big holidays turn into last-minute, little ones.

A few years ago, I was in [Stanford's Book Store](#) in London. It's the biggest travel bookstore on earth, and for a travel junkie like me, it was like falling through the doors of Longacre into heaven.

In the remainder bin, I spotted a book with an odd title: [132 Seize the Days](#).

Its thesis was this: when you add up your paid holidays, plus weekends, plus statutory holidays and the don't-ask-don't-tell holidays like the week between Christmas and New Year's, there are 132 days in a year when you could be travelling.

That random encounter with a remaindered book taught me one of life's great lessons. Knowing how much time you have to travel is the first step in letting travel into more of your life and letting travel use its enormous restorative power to change your life for the better.

The second step is to plan your travel, not just for the holidays, but for the next two to three years – and even the next two to three decades. Really? Why not?

My wife and I lead crazy busy lives. She's a doctor; I'm a communications consultant. People ask us over and over: "How do you possibly find the time to get away?"

Well, we have the same 24 hours they have. But we make travel a top priority. If we didn't constantly work to keep at the top of our minds, I can guarantee that the trek to [Mt. Everest](#), the gorilla tracking in [Rwanda](#), the kayaking in [Antarctica](#), they would never have happened. They're some of the most cherished parts of our lives.

As [Zita Cobb](#) (a woman whose monument you'll meet at the end of this talk) once said: "The most important thing is to keep the most important thing the most important thing."

Ever since we came off the Appalachian Trail, we've been blocking off trips far ahead, trips that only a true emergency will cause us to erase.

We go to our cottage up north. We love our weekends there. But we also use it as a base camp for other travel, like overnight kayaking trips. We also visit a different European capital for New Years.

And twice a year, we take a big trip, like we did in May to the [Australian Outback](#). This takes a lot of Aeroplan Miles. It takes not spending your money on other things. But more than that, it takes a commitment to getting out and seeing the world – while we still can. I'm 69, my wife 76. So there's no escaping it; we're in the Departure Lounge. We'll continue to travel – until we can't. Because we believe that people don't slow down because they get old; they get old because they slow down.

In fact, we view travel planning the way many people view financial planning.

You should have a plan for your travel just as you do for your money. Not just for this year but for 10 and 20 years ahead. You should save for your travel just as you do your retirement. What places do you want to get to? What will it cost?

Your financial consultant asks: "What kind of life do you want in 30 years?" If travel is part of that life *over* the next 30 years and beyond, that's nearly as valid a question to ask yourself.

So you should sit down with an expert once a year and go over your plan. Or sit down with each other, then get online. The internet knows much more than the best travel agent ever could. And with artificial intelligence and travel bots coming your way, the travel expert who knows you best could soon be an algorithm.

Before you hit the road, it's important to be disciplined, focussed, determined.

But once you're on the road, the opposite holds true: be spontaneous because adventure is not in the guidebook and beauty is not on the map.

The good news, the surprising news, is all of us here are lucky to have a travel companion by our side already, a local who knows every nook and cranny of our deepest hopes for where travel can take us. We're lucky also because that companion wasn't available until the past few years, and luckier still that they will be even more there for us with every new step we take.

That companion, of course, is technology. If you're old friends with travel technology, I encourage you to deepen your relationship. If you're fearful of technology or feel dorky around it, get ...help...now! Because the world of travel technology is almost as wondrous as the world of travel itself. Don't cut short your potential for happiness by not learning how to work the simple tools that can make it so much easier – and often cheaper – than ever.

Millions of us already use Facebook to crowdsource travel tips. We use [GoogleMaps](#) to navigate the canals of Venice, [Trip Advisor](#) to find what exactly “the best restaurant at Bloor and Bathurst” really means. We use our [Kobo](#) readers that let us carry hundreds of books in the palm of our hand.

None of these, not Facebook, GoogleMaps, TripAdvisor or Kobo, is as old as your 15-year old. Yet they shape and define our travel and our lives.

It seems the future enters our lives long before it happens. So what will soon be entering our lives and shaping how we travel – and why we travel – in the years ahead?

Get ready for [Hyperloop Travel](#) that will propel you in a vacuum tube from Toronto to Montreal in 35 minutes – at speeds up to 700 miles an hour. It's not here yet, but with both Richard Branson and Elon Musk competing to make it happen, odds are it will be like driverless cars which kind of snuck up on us when we weren't watching, didn't they?

Hyperloop travel means that ground travel can be much faster than air travel. Think how that will let you seize those 132 days.

Speaking of hyper-speed, what ever happened to supersonic travel? We all thought it died with the last flight of the [Concorde](#) which was 15 years ago.

But it's alive again. NASA and Japan Air Lines hope to launch a much quieter plane that flies faster than the speed of sound in 2020...which is just 400 days away. At the same time, and I also mean within the next 400 days, Uber will test a fleet of airborne taxis in Dubai, Dallas and Los Angeles.

But the future of travel is already 300 days in the past. At this year's Winter Olympics in Korea, travelers were met by [helpful robots](#) at Incheon Airport. The robots scanned your boarding pass, offered directions to your gate and answered your questions in four languages.

Recall that five years ago, people were still using CDs, reading travel guides, showing paper boarding passes.

What happened?

[Apps](#) happened.

Today there are apps that let you check your bags for your flight from your home, and apps that can instantly understand a foreign language (that's via Google Buds which can understand 40 languages, play your music, make phone calls and get directions too). Other apps can unlock your hotel room with your phone, let you know the precise minute to buy your ticket to Dubai at the lowest price, guide you to the hot new restaurant in a strange city that's perfectly attuned to your taste and would love to accommodate your screaming child – oh, and apps that can instantly translate the menu.

In some hotels, ordering room service by talking to Alexa or Siri is so...last year! Very soon – as in the next 500 days – some airports will use face-recognition technology, not to determine if you're a terrorist, but if you're a business class traveler. They'll offer exclusive discounts, not available to other passengers at the duty free and other stores in the airport.

Apps can also reduce the great pain points of air travel. The Lufthansa App now lets you track where your lost luggage is and when it will arrive. Valantio helps predict many hours ahead when a flight will be overbooked. It then sends offers to flexible passengers to reward them for rebooking on other flights. No more drama at the airport gate. There's even an app that can tell you how long the turbulence will last on your flight – while you're on the flight. Not sure how long *that* app will be around.

There are hundreds of examples of how technology is transforming travel. Suitcases today can not only follow you on wheels, but charge your phone while they do it. The sight of 5,000 passengers at Pearson with five thousand bags rolling obediently behind...well, the mind boggles at the traffic jam – or the chaos if Pearson's WiFi fails.

A frequent flyer program is now offering its members a 'sound-and-sniff' experience. When they walk through the Tuileries Garden in Paris, their iPhone will not only play music and poetry to enhance their experience of the flowers, but enhance the scent of each particular flower...Don't ask me how.

I assume this is an early stage of augmented reality, which has vast potential for tourism especially. Imagine being able to smell the French bread while you're watching the video about Hidden Paris.

But what really has the power to revolutionize how we plan our travel is [Virtual Reality](#), or VR.

Being able to immerse yourself, to actually feel like you ARE on top of the mountain, with a 360 degree view, will be a powerful marketing tool for just about any destination. Nearly two-thirds of Americans today are ready to use virtual reality to explore holiday destinations in order to decide where to go and what to do.

Driving augmented reality and virtual reality and those millions of apps is an advance that will make today's internet speeds feel like molasses.

If you have a smart phone, it likely runs on a "4G" network, that is to say 4th generation.

But coming early next year is "[5G](#)" and with it, you'll be able to download full-length movies in seconds, use your smart phone to experience Virtual Reality, and basically do instantly what you can't do on your phone now since 5G is many times faster than 4G. How much faster? Up to a thousand times. But what if it's only 100 times, or even just 10? That's huge.

What I know today is that the GPS on my iPhone will keep me from getting lost, [Google Translate](#) will let me understand Icelandic, and Uber will rescue me in Capetown. In fact, apps let me become an urban explorer, a 21st century Franklin or Shackleton, with much less risk and cost.

That's the promise technology brings to travel.

How can you make the most of it?

I urge you to use your highly-developed sense of curiosity.

Spend a couple of hours tonight googling on your laptop. You're all highly educated. It's time to self-educate in travel technology. If you don't know much about tech, get a tech-savvy friend or family member to introduce you to this astounding new language. I'm certain your curiosity will take you not just to booking apps like kayak.com, and highly-curated trips like trufflepig.com, but to sites that can give you New York on \$1,000 a day – for \$200 a day.

That's the promise of technology in travel. But as with everything around tech, there can be a nasty downside too.

The first issue is philosophical. If you're always on – and there is now one WiFi hotspot for every eight people on earth – how can the age-old promise of getting away from it all be real? It's interesting that some hotels and resorts are now offering "offline" spaces and entire vacations – and are charging extra for it!

There's another downside to the astounding growth of travel and how technology makes travel easier and cheaper for millions of people. Technology isn't the only culprit here. But it's certainly an enabler.

Jean Paul Sartre once said that hell is other people. And if you're standing in line for hours at Disneyworld or trying to swim in one of the 23 pools in the world's largest cruise liner that holds 9,000 passengers, or even trying to squeeze your 6'2" frame into a tiny seat at the back of a sold-out flight, you know there's such a thing as too much of a muchness.

That's exactly what's happening in some of the world's most popular travel destinations. Overtourism is not only ruining the very places that people flock to see, it's causing civil unrest (in English that means "riots") in some of those most civilized places.

Last summer, the citizens of Barcelona marched in the streets in order to save their city from the masses of tourists. La Rambla is Barcelona's most famous street but it's so crowded as to be virtually impassable for nine months of the year.

But the world capital of mass tourism is Venice. It now has so many tourists – 60,000 a day – that authorities have proposed banning people from sitting on the ground. Visitors are forced to do this because sitting on the steps that surround St. Mark's Square is already banned.

Amsterdam, a city of 850,000 has 18 million tourists a year. Hordes of tourists bike through red lights on their rented bicycles. Instead of looking at the street, they're staring at Google Maps on their smartphones, causing residents to jump back and swear at them. One day in August, there were three accidents and four collisions in 20 minutes.

Amsterdam City Council is fighting back. Construction of new hotels has been banned, and it's considering banning businesses catering exclusively to tourists: souvenir shops, postcard kiosks, cheese stores which no resident would dare set foot in, waffle and crepes stores. This affects new ones, not existing ones, but no city on earth has gone this far.

Lest you think overtourism is "their" problem... Last August, the warden of Waterton Lakes National Park on the Alberta-Montana border briefly closed the park to the public because it was overwhelmed by visitors. Last summer as well, Tofino, the Vancouver Island town of 4,000 people, ran out of water coping with its 25,000 visitors.

We're all slowly learning that travel is an extractive industry, like mining and fishing. Exploit it too much, get too greedy, and the object of your desire will collapse from overuse.

Just as we all have to ask ourselves what we can do to stop climate change, this may be the time to ask what can we do to stop over-tourism. The ice is melting the Arctic, the tourists are sinking the streets of Venice. They're not the same problem, but they're close enough that we really need to think why we travel, because that shapes how we travel.

Those changes are driven by the growing sense that happiness doesn't come from things. It comes from memories. Not just "If it's Tuesday, this must be Belgium" memories. But the deep engaging memories of people in different places that make up a life well-lived.

I'm not a social scientist. So my view is anecdotal at best. But my sense is that while vistas like the Grand Canyon, the Taj Mahal and the Louvre will remain stunningly attractive in and of themselves, beyond those "Oh wow", bucket-list, notch-in-the-belt destinations, what we now crave when we travel is real connection, deeper meaning and lasting memories.

Funny, they're the very things we crave at home. It's just that the world of travel is now ready to accommodate this new imperative in travel. This accounts for the rise in modes of travel that barely existed a decade ago and that are now in the mainstream.

Like [voluntourism](#) where you go to a developing country not just to lie on their beach, but to help their people build a school at the same time. There's a growing sense that we are all connected and that volunteering even your vacation time is part of leading authentic life.

Or like Indigenous Tourism where you touch and hopefully immerse yourself in a culture, often in your homeland, that your forebears ruthlessly exploited. Indigenous Tourism is growing in countries with large indigenous populations, like Australia and New Zealand, but also in Nordic countries like Sweden and Russia, and here in Canada as well. In fact, Indigenous Tourism isn't just going to be big here; it already is.

It seems that one in three international travelers to Canada wants an Indigenous experience. Half of all German tourists want that same experience and an astounding two-thirds of French visitors say they want to experience Indigenous Canada. In BC alone, there are over 700 indigenous businesses which create 7,400 full-time jobs. As one Indigenous leader said: "The appetite for authenticity doesn't mean we have to play Indian."

This search for personal fulfillment through travel plays a big role in the rise of everything from eco-lodges and small-group guided walking tours, to Airbnb, which promises not the false veneer of a hotel, but life's real arena in any neighbourhood you choose.

I said earlier that many more people are travelling not just to discover new people and places, but to discover themselves. They are searching for authenticity, for real connection. Would you rather stay in a tourist hotel in Reykjavik or live, even for just a weekend...a real Reykjavik-er's life?

Just as the internet has let us create huge online communities of people with deeply specific interests, so the world of travel is rushing to meet them in the actual world.

This year, for the first time, Cunard, the storied cruise line, is collaborating with Ancestry.com to give their passengers the opportunity to trace their family lineage while taking the same life-changing voyage many of their ancestors made generations before. [Cunard's Ancestry](#) trips include four genealogists on board and a guided tour of Ellis Island when you get to New York.

Alumni travel, cooking trips, music trips, photography trips, destination marathons, fishing trips, gambling junkets. They've been around forever and will be here forever more.

But now there's also conflict travel (where you visit war zones) and death travel, not just to seek doctor-assisted suicide in Switzerland, but to join a cruise of elderly passengers and sail off into your sunset.

Women's travel is on the rise, driven by solo travelers. This trend is fast becoming a movement, with more women-only tours and services. There's even a female-only luxury retreat on a private island off the coast of Finland. Little wonder 70% of Canadian women say they're likely to take a solo trip in the future.

Which brings me to one of the fastest-growing sub-sectors of travel, [medical tourism](#). 10 years ago, those words either drew blank stares or snorts of derision. Today, medical tourism is a \$61 billion industry, predicted to rise to twice that in the next three years.

The reasons for its growth are familiar to all of us in Canada: an ageing population, rising incidence of cancer and heart disease, lack of access to quality healthcare at home, rising healthcare costs, long wait times – and of course, the ease and low cost of travel.

Much *much* larger than medical tourism is [wellness tourism](#) which at \$630 billion a year is ten times its size. And lest you think that just means spas...even though there are more spas in North America than there are Starbucks...well, the global spa economy makes up just one-sixth of wellness tourism.

Now, the rise of new forms of travel and the many shifts in why we travel and what we do when we travel – these aren't just driven by technology and social change. They're also a function of changing demographics and group norms.

The fastest-growing sectors of the travel business are luxury travel ...and low-cost travel. In terms of style and activity, the fastest-growing segment is adventure travel. This is why you're seeing so many luxury adventure travel trips advertised. A big factor here is us boomers.

Many of us are retiring. With the kids launched and the nest empty, many have money to spend. Many want to travel differently than in the past. So luxury adventure fits that bill. Expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic are packed. Hotels that grew out of legacy luxury brands – like [Armani](#), [Bulgari](#), [Ferragamo](#) and [Gucci](#) – yes, they're all hotel chains now – and they're also packed.

Of course, demographics always play a role in everything. If you're a baby girl born this morning in Tokyo, the chances of you living to be 100 are one in two. There are huge implications, good and bad, to that.

That baby girl in Tokyo will be unlocking her smartphone before her first birthday. For her, virtual travel and augmented reality will be second nature. By the time she takes her first trip, she'll have seen and experienced the world many times over.

But there's another generation, Gen Z, who are helping to bend travel to their will. They're born between 1995 and 2010 and now make up 25% of the US population, so they're a larger cohort than the Baby Boomers or the Millennials who every travel marketer is falling over to reach these days. When *they're* ready to retire, Gen Zers may look back on travel today and ask: "Grandma: What's a plane?"

But if you're a Millennial, that is, you were born between 1980 and 1994, you can board [U by Uniworld](#), an offshoot of the global giant cruise line, with trips 100% geared and priced for your age bracket. For \$250 a day, you can have the upscale feel and adult amenities of an experience costing two and three times that. Not the exact experience, but enough to make you feel special enough to sign on again.

If you're a millennial, there's a good chance you'll become a [Digital Nomad](#), a new kind of global citizen whose office is their laptop and whose hunger for community means they can travel 365 days a year.

Millennials are also hooked on [Instagram](#), the photo and video-sharing network. It's so important to their lives that 40% of millennials will actually choose a travel destination based mainly on its Instagrammability. Now there's demographics and technology teaming up to turn travel planning on its head.

But you don't have to be young or rich to ride the demographic wave. If you're a budget traveler, this is your golden age. Entire sites are dedicated to helping you rack up credit card points, towards finding absurdly cheap deals, towards "hacking" travel to the point of it basically being free.

Again, a couple of evenings on google will introduce you to the world of low-cost travel. And if you're an expert in anything to do with travel – like food, wine, or women's travel, or elder travel, or cruise ships, and you have enough of a following on social media, there's a chance you can convert those followers into free or discounted travel for yourself.

I want to sum up all these changes by diving more deeply into a trend that sums up pretty much everything I've been talking about today – from the emboldening powers of travel technologies, to the individual quest to view travel not as a diversion from life, but as something central to a deeply-lived life and a better world.

This 'thing' is a company, a service, a disruptor, an app and a behemoth that epitomizes so much of how travel has changed today. Its growth virtually guarantees it will force even bigger changes tomorrow.

It's called Airbnb. Airbnb exists because of the Internet and Apps and because millions...billions of people...want a more authentic experience when they travel.

Airbnb was founded in 2008 when two college room-mates, Brian Chesky and Joe Gebbia, had a hard time paying the rent on their San Francisco loft apartment. That August, a giant trade show was in town and hotel rooms were not to be had. So Chesky and Gebbia rented out air mattresses in their apartment and ...thus was born Airbnb.

Today, it is bigger than the top five hotel chains in the world combined. It owns no real estate and hosts no events. It is simply a broker, matching travelers who need a place to stay with locals who have a place – or an experience – to offer them. Its revenues last year were \$2.6 billion.

In the last two years, it has expanded to offer Airbnb Experiences, on the theory that the kind of outgoing hospitable people who make good hosts might also make great guides for things they're expert at anyway – from cooking to bicycling to gallery-hopping. [Airbnb Experiences](#) has grown at the rate of 1,000% a year in 2016 and last year. Now there's something called [Airbnb Concerts](#), which are private musical events hosted in people's homes or after hours at bars – limited to 16 or so people and serving food and drinks.

Let me tell you about our experience with Airbnb. We're hotel people when we go to big cities. The idea of sharing someone's apartment, of having to be nice to them, is as appealing as sharing their toothbrush.

But with Airbnb, we quickly learned you don't have to rent just a room; you can rent an entire apartment. And we did that because the price of hotels in New York is insanely high. So we tried Airbnb one winter weekend in 2014.

Much cheaper, a small apartment in the West Village. We loved it. It really was all about the neighbourhood. Since then, we've used Airbnb in Capetown, London, Vienna and Rome. And in Rome, we enjoyed our first Airbnb Experience. We went on a guided [biking tour](#) of the Old Roman Road.

Eight of us turned up at a bike shop near the main train station in Rome where we were greeted with espresso and pastiera, fitted for our bikes, given helmets and were soon off on a tour of Ancient Rome led by two Airbnb hosts who were also bicycle activists who spoke perfect English. We bicycled the Road, then doubled back through Rome's vast urban parks (who knew?) and ended with a picnic on the lawn with the six other Airbnb people we didn't know. Total time: four hours. Total cost: 40 Euros each.

Such a great time and a great deal too. Next year, we plan to go to Tokyo. I've already checked out a three-hour trip that's hugely appealing to us, though likely not to everyone: a guided tour of [Tokyo's rivers](#) by kayak. Heaven! Cost? \$60 US dollars.

Not everyone loves Airbnb. Like Uber, they tussle constantly with regulators like civic governments who are losing revenues in the form of hotel taxes and apartment owners and landlords who don't like largely absentee tenants who only use their apartment to rent to Airbnb clients. This isn't a skirmish between technology and regulation (a battle that technology so often wins).

It's a war. This summer, Vancouver City Council ruled that people who operate Airbnb listings need to have a business license. The day that came into effect, a third of the city's 4,000 listings disappeared.

But Airbnb is here to stay, in some form or other, and its hyper-growth signals where it's really headed. Last February, it bought the Canadian villa rental company, [Luxury Retreats International](#), for \$300 million – so they now want to offer all levels of accommodation for all kinds of travelers. Even more telling, this February their CEO said the company is considering launching its own airline.

This isn't just expansion. This is the holy grail, what no one company has been able to do – and that is to own your entire travel experience from end-to-end. American Express, Thomas Cook, Expedia and the others...the one thing they can't control is air. Airbnb has the money, the technology, the ambition, the culture and the market to do that.

It also has a keen sense of tomorrow: last year, it bought [Accomable](#), a service that offers accessible travel for disabled people.

Airbnb has the best chance of anyone of becoming truly global, precisely because its appeal is deeply local. A sort of Richard Branson meets Jane Jacobs.

Let me now take you to the opposite end of where I believe travel is headed. To a place where it's even more local. More authentic. But very, very small. The [Fogo Island Inn](#) was opened five years ago by Zita Cobb who was born in Joe Batt's Arm, Newfoundland.

She'd made her fortune in the world of tech. At one point, she was the third highest paid woman in America.

But she cashed it all in and came home and decided the best way to revive her dying island – the cod had died out there and the population was fleeing for jobs elsewhere – was to build a six-star, 29 room hotel at the edge of the sea.

The rates at the Inn are \$1,875 a night and it's a very long hard slog to even get there. People thought Zita was crazy.

Well, crazy like a fox. The Inn turned a profit in its third summer and now, in Year 5, it continues to attract clients from the world over.

So is Zita Cobb selling luxury?

Not a chance. The hotel is certainly lovely. But you don't go there for that.

What Zita has managed to bottle is the very thing that makes Fogo and Newfoundland truly unique: the people, their stories, their humour, their dense dialects. In short, in Zita Cobb's words, their sacred capital. What makes them different from every other community in the world, and because of that difference, of rare and growing value.

Fogo is called a hotel, but I think it's actually a Trojan Horse for a value system and economic model that the world is starting to turn its mind to. The Inn will only be as big as the community it can support. It is not scalable. But it is replicable. It's about being a community asset rather than a cash-cow.

I asked a friend of mine who'd been to the Inn why it draws universal raves from its clients. Not just "It was great." Not that kind of rave. Something else entirely.

That friend is a tough litigation lawyer in a big downtown law firm. Here's what my friend said: "We've been lucky to have stayed in some pretty fine hotels around the world. But Fogo is the only place where, when we got home on Sunday night, I called the front desk and told them we got home safe."

Isn't that what we all want when we travel?

That sense of deep connection and caring. The idea that you've not only seen, not only met, not only engaged very different people and places, but made them a part of your life because they've brought you into their lives.

So, if I have helped you re-ignite that sense in your own life by getting you to think in new ways about what travel can really mean, well, all aboard!

Thank you.

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