

# LESSONS FROM THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

GABI STEINDL'S LIFE LESSONS ARE AS WELL WORN AS HER PASSPORT. HER CONTINUAL PURSUIT OF NEW TERRITORY HAS TAKEN HER TO SOME INCREDIBLY WILD AND ISOLATED PLACES FOR KITING, WHICH IS WHY WE OFTEN FEATURE HER IN THE MAG. HERE ARE NINE LESSONS THAT SHE WISHES TO SHARE, LEARNT FROM THREE DECADES OF TRAVELLING

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## 01 - TRAVEL IMPROVES YOUR PROBLEM-SOLVING

Adapting to strange situations or sudden problems becomes easier with each trip. The canny traveller thinks on their feet. The more you travel, the better you'll get at efficient problem-solving which is of huge value in all areas of life.

## 02 - GOING WITH THE FLOW MAKES THE BEST OF SITUATIONS

I used to stress about things that I had no influence over (such as the weather) and consequently, I ruined many experiences. For example, I went to Taiwan in statistically the driest and windiest month of the year. That November turned into the wettest November in over 150 years, raining for three weeks straight. I travelled thousands of kilometres chasing sun and wind but still couldn't escape the rain. Did being in a bad mood change anything? No. It only stopped me from enjoying the new situations and experiences that the relentless rain had

presented. After three weeks of misery, the weather cleared up. Finally, I was in the right place at the right time and I got a couple of sessions in. My gratitude for these few sessions made me realise my impatience had been totally fruitless and that experience has helped me ever since.

In Chile last year I got badly hurt during my first kite session. I gained eight stitches in my hand and was told to take at least ten days off the water, so decided to fly to Patagonia and go hiking, which turned out to be one of the most unforgettable experiences of my life.

A million things can go wrong on a trip but that's okay. Embrace them, accept things, look for solutions and try to make the most of it.

## 03 - WHAT TRAVEL CANNOT DO

Travel isn't a panacea. Running away to the other side of the world won't fix your problems. I've realised many times that you can still feel awful in paradise - even if the palm trees are bending, the sun is shining and everybody around you is happy.

While travel certainly can make you happy in the short run, real happiness is not connected to a place. If you're not happy on the inside, your dissatisfaction will catch up with you, no matter how far away you venture.



Make new friends

## 04 - TRAVEL IS EYE OPENING

Status. Wealth. The daily grind. Those things lose their importance when you find yourself in a totally new destination; an environment where nobody knows you, or has a clue about your job, your achievements or your problems. It's totally up to you if you want to engage with life back home by conversing about it, or be in touch with people back there.

Total anonymity is a very powerful experience. It gives perspective. From a distance, things become clearer and finding solutions often become much easier.

## 07 - SOLO DOES NOT MEAN LONELY

I was recently stuck on a super remote, tiny island in the South Pacific with dengue fever (I only found out what it was once back in Australia). I was experiencing the worst pain of my life and a high fever. It was scary and I wanted to get out of there, but flights departed only twice a week from another island and there was no phone coverage or internet. What happened? Total strangers took care of me.

Despite the situation, I never felt lonely. Travelling solo has opened up conversations, friendships and opportunities that

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## 05 - BRING A GIFT

It's common courtesy to take a bottle of wine or box of chocolates when a friend invites you for dinner. As travellers, this is often forgotten. Being invited to someone's home is a beautiful gesture. You don't have to take presents for everyone you meet, but the simple act of presenting even just one person with a small souvenir from your country can make this person's day and help ingratiate yourself in new surroundings. In remote places I love to take useful things like pens and paper for isolated schools. On a recent trip to the Solomon Islands I took school essentials, basketballs, footballs and, for small kids who weren't in school yet, balloons. Even after the balloons broke days into them having been constantly played with, the kid's eyes were still sparkling while they carried the remaining pieces around like treasure.

## 06 - PACK LIGHT - YOU CAN BUY MOST THINGS AT YOUR DESTINATION

Travel shows us how little we actually need to make it through the days, weeks and months. Anyone who has travelled back-packer style for an extended period knows that less is more. The same applies to kite travel, even more so considering airline luggage policies and hefty excess baggage rates. Mind you, I gotta say I'm guilty of taking a lot of gear. But as I often travel to destinations where the next kite shop is literally a few thousand kilometres away, I like to take spares. But in terms of clothes, cosmetics or other deadweight, I keep that to a bare minimum. My apparel and toiletries usually fit into my backpack as hand luggage.

wouldn't have arisen if I'd been travelling with someone else. You interact with the world differently when it's just you, and the world interacts with you differently, too.

## 08 - SMILING IS INTERNATIONAL

Smiling is a universal language. It transcends cultures, makes you approachable and opens doors. If you back up a smile with learning the basics of a language you'll make new friends anywhere in no time.

## 09 - LEARN TO TRUST

Solo trip, Oman, I was on a ferry amongst a group of local men dressed in the traditional Arabian white 'Thawb' with rifles and 'Khanjars' (the traditional dagger of Oman) strapped to their waists. Due to the language barrier we couldn't talk, but instead communicated with gestures. For reasons that I will never know, we were suddenly having a little party. The men were singing and the women clapped their hands as we danced and made music together. Empty buckets that were rolling around on deck became drums and some of the men used their daggers to stab holes in the air to the rhythm.

Travelling beautifully unravels prejudices if you let it happen.

Find more on Gabi's immense travels at: [www.kitegabi.com](http://www.kitegabi.com). She is sponsored by Duotone and IDN KW



Unravel prejudices and join the party!



Out there



Kiting can lead you to special places