



# MEMORABLE MOMENTS

How to pack your travel itinerary full of opportunities to create those memories.



 FEET ON FOREIGN LANDS



**We do not remember  
days, we remember  
moments.**

**Cesare Pavese**





# What are memorable moments and why do they matter?



On my blog, [Feet on Foreign Lands](#), I talk a lot about maximizing the happiness that you wring out of any travel experience. I have a theory that there are [three stages of travel happiness](#), and the third of those is the reminiscing that happens after the travel is over and you're back into day to day life at home.

'Memorable moments' are those travel memories of a time, a place or an experience that stick with you and bring a smile to your face, even years later.

With a bit of pre-planning (and my handy checklist\*), you can create a travel itinerary that is packed with opportunities to create these moments.

Of course, not every memorable moment can be planned. A lot happen spontaneously. But by being in the present and immersed in your experience rather than worrying about what you're going to do next, you're more likely to notice these moments as they happen.

So read on for the ultimate checklist that creates a rocking travel itinerary, and just possibly, sets up many of those memorable moments you'll smile about for years to come.

*\* Find your own printable checklist at the end of this guide.*



# The ultimate travel itinerary checklist

Whether I'm planning travel for a weekend or a month, I try to tick off as many of these categories as I can when I'm drawing up the itinerary. Explanations (and real-life examples) of each item are on the following pages, including links to where I've written about the real-life examples.



Two feet and a heartbeat



Outside the comfort zone



A taste of the local food



On stage



Let's get physical



Big-ticket icons



Off-the-beaten-track quirkiness



Lifelong learning



A bit of pampering



Time to wander and get lost



To market, to market



Night vision



Get high



Natural wonders



Treasures from the archives





**Life is about  
moments.  
Don't wait  
for them.  
Create them.**

# Two feet and a heartbeat



There is no better way to experience a new location, than to get out and walk around it.

You see and experience so much more while on foot than you do from the window of a taxi, the top level of a bus, or underground in a metro system. They're all great ways to get about quickly and efficiently, but make sure you factor in some wandering time, whether it's unstructured rambling (see also: Time to Wander and Get Lost) or an organized walking tour or experience.

## Some of our walking experiences include:

- A walking street food tour in Hoi An, Vietnam
- [A day exploring the city with Hanoi Kids](#) in Hanoi, Vietnam
- [The interactive performance/tour "The Accomplice"](#), New York City, USA
- [Traversing Central Park in the snow](#), New York City, USA
- [Walking the bottom tip of Manhattan Island](#), New York City, USA
- [The Appian Way and Catacombs](#) in Rome, Italy
- Self-guided [City Walks walking tour cards](#)





# Outside the comfort zone



I'm not keen on small spaces, things that go very fast, swerve around corners and drop suddenly, or contraptions that hang from a thin wire high in the sky. They're all experiences which sit firmly *outside* my comfort zone. But taking on some of these challenges, and surviving to tell the tale, has created some of my most memorable moments. Travel is a time to push the boundaries of your comfort zone, whatever they may be, and try new experiences.

**Some of our experiences that pushed me outside my comfort zone include:**

- [Roller coasters at Disneyland and Walt Disney World](#), USA
- [Rides at The Wizarding World of Harry Potter](#) at Universal, Orlando, Florida
- [Going into the Cu Chi Tunnels](#) in Vietnam
- [Ascending Panorama Langkawi cable car](#), Malaysia
- [Megazip Ziplining at Sentosa Island](#), Singapore
- [New Year's Eve on the Streets of Saigon's District 1](#), Vietnam







**Life begins at the end  
of your comfort zone.**

**Neale Donald Walsch**



# A taste of the local food



Why travel all the way to foreign lands, and then sit down to a meal of burger and chips (...unless you're travelling to the US and are in a diner)?

One of the biggest joys of travel is experiencing the food culture of the destination. Local foods and restaurants are a huge part of any of our travel, and I often write up summaries of where we ate (for example, see my posts about restaurants in [New York](#), [Ho Chi Minh City](#) and [Palm Cove](#)).

Be adventurous!

**Some of our local food experiences include:**

- [Kunefe](#) in Istanbul, Turkey
- [Fruit Rojak](#) in Penang, Malaysia
- [A cute Trastevere bistro](#) in Rome, Italy
- [High Tea at the Eastern & Oriental Hotel](#) in Georgetown, Malaysia
- [Pizza](#) in New York City, USA
- [Philly cheesesteaks](#) in Philadelphia, USA
- [Butterbeer at The Wizarding World of Harry Potter](#), Universal Orlando, USA



# On Stage



As the saying goes, *all the world's a stage*, but it's also great to schedule some actual dramatic performances into an itinerary.

In some locations, you need to plan this well in advance to snag tickets for the shows you really want to see (e.g. Broadway), but if you're happy to take pot luck, you can just wander down to a theatre or box office, see what's on, and whether there are any tickets left.

## Some of our theatrical experiences include:

- Venezia: The Show in Venice, Italy
- [Broadway shows](#) in New York City, USA
- [The A.O.Show](#) in Saigon, Vietnam
- [Carols by Candlelight in the Myer Music Bowl](#), Melbourne
- Whirling dervishes in Istanbul, Turkey
- [The Rockettes at Radio City](#), NYC
- Water puppets in Hanoi, Vietnam





# Let's Get Physical



After three weeks in Italy, eating pasta, enjoying the delicious gelato, sipping the occasional vino, I was sure I would have gained several kilograms. However, when we returned to Australia, I had actually lost weight. I put that down to the amount of walking we did in each place we stayed. Don't sit on a tour bus each day...get out and do something physical.

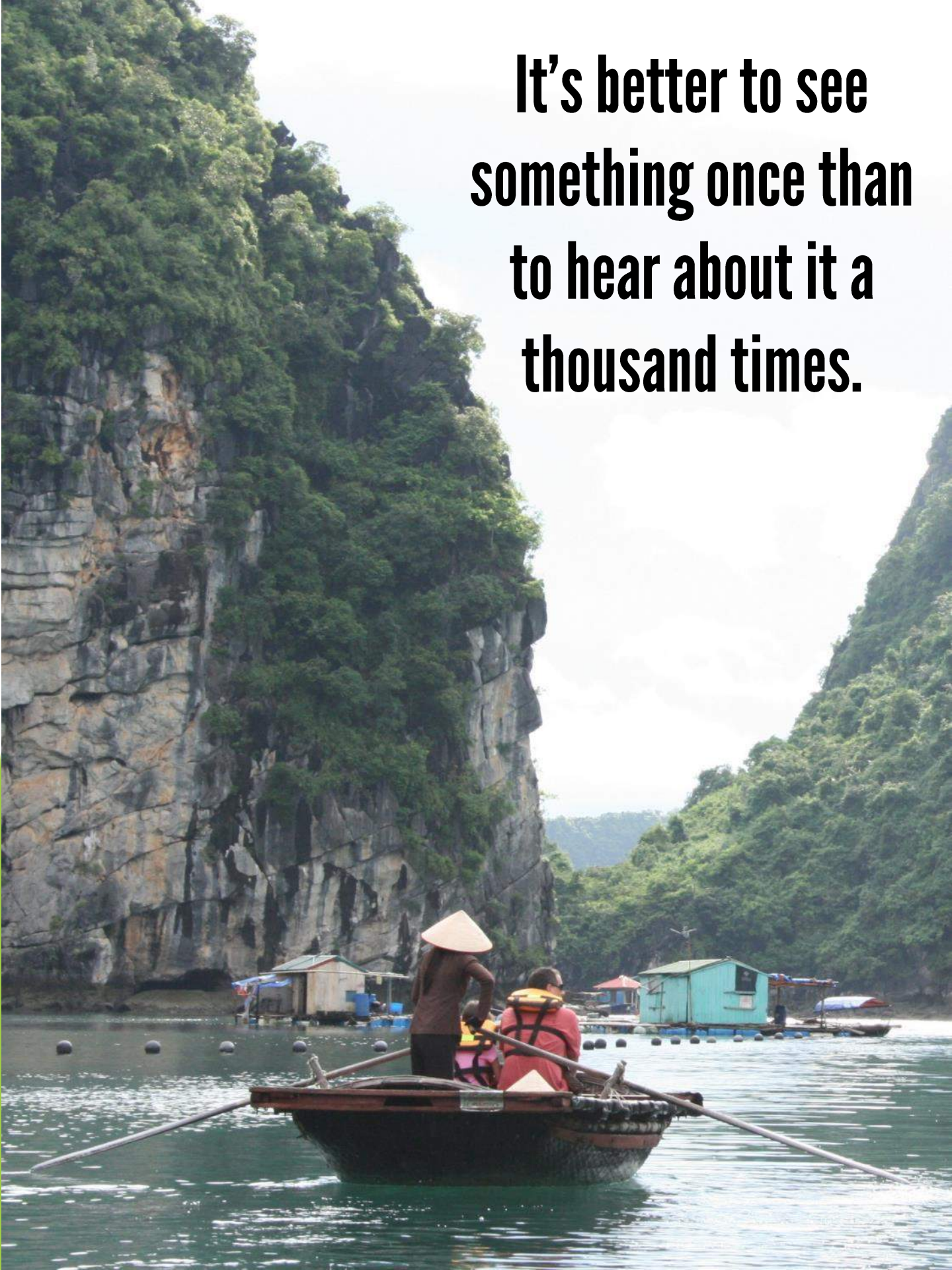
## Some of our physical experiences include:

- [Swimming through blue and green grottos](#) at Capri, Italy
- [A countryside cycling tour](#) at Hoi An, Vietnam
- [Cycling around Central Park](#), New York City, USA
- [Surfing at Bondi Beach](#), Sydney, Australia
- [Ice-skating at the Wollman Ice Rink](#) in Central Park, New York City, USA
- [Climbing any high tower wherever we are](#)
- Extensively walking the streets of any new location





**It's better to see  
something once than  
to hear about it a  
thousand times.**





# Big-ticket icons



In every destination there will be what I like to call ‘the big-ticket icons’ – places or experiences that are synonymous with that location: The Statue of Liberty in NYC, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Angkor Wat in Siem Reap. However, if you have a limited time in a location, you can spend the whole itinerary ticking off those icons and there’s no time left to experience some of the quieter, unexpected delights.

So, I draw up a list of the top icons for each new place I visit and then decide which of those are non-negotiable. What would I regret not seeing? Which ones can I leave for a future visit?

## Some of the icons I just had to see include:

- [Independence Hall](#), Philadelphia, USA
- [The Colosseum](#), Rome, Italy
- [The US Capitol](#), Washington DC, USA
- [A water taxi trip across the lagoon](#), Venice, Italy
- [Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge](#), Australia
- [The Duomo](#), Florence, Italy
- [The Bridge of Sighs](#), Venice, Italy
- [The Statue of Liberty](#), New York City, USA



# Off-the-beaten-track quirkiness



**Quirky** (adjective): Having or characterized by peculiar or unexpected traits or aspects.

Quirky experiences create some of the most memorable moments.

Sometimes, you can be lucky and just land in a destination when a unique festival is happening (such as the [Full Moon Festival in Hoi An](#), the [Cherry Blossom Festival](#) in Washington DC, [New Year's Eve in Saigon](#) or [Vivid Sydney](#)), or you can seek out adventures that offer something a bit different from the usual travel itinerary.

Some of our quirky experiences include:

- [The Escape Hunt Experience](#), Saigon, Vietnam
- [Aura Vision Photography](#), Singapore
- [Noir: Dining in the dark](#), Saigon, Vietnam
- [Seeking ghost signs](#)
- [Street art in Bendigo](#), Australia
- [FAO Schwarz toy shop opening rituals](#), New York City, USA







**Learning is not  
a product of  
schooling but  
the lifelong  
attempt to  
acquire it.**

**Albert Einstein**

# Life-long learning



There is nothing you can't learn while you are travelling: a new language, cooking skills, craft techniques, how to be a masai warrior, bush survival, art history. If you have a yearning, there will be a learning opportunity. There is a real sense of achievement in returning from travel with new knowledge or skills under your belt.

You don't have to commit to a three-month intensive language course (although, you *can*...if that's your thing). Learning experiences can be as brief as a couple of hours tuition in a traditional craft, or a half-day bushwalk learning about indigenous bushfoods.

## Some of our learning experiences include:

- [Sophie's Art Tour](#), Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- [Melbourne](#) and [Sydney Writers' Festivals](#)
- [Cooking School](#), Hoi An, Vietnam
- [Surfing lessons](#), Bondi Beach, Sydney, Australia
- [Batik painting](#), Langkawi, Malaysia





# A bit of pampering



I love a day spa. A darkened, quiet room. Warmth. Exotic fragrances. Or if there's some hot water spouting out of the ground, I'll be up to my neck in it!

There are plenty of opportunities around the world to include pampering experiences in your itinerary.

However, I have a tendency to include some of the more...ahem...*unusual* local offerings in my itinerary, and that has led to a number of [awkward day spa experiences](#).

You don't need to be quite as adventurous as me in your choices, but it's always lovely to include a bit of pampering time in any itinerary.

**Some of our pampering experiences include:**

- [Thap Ba Hot Springs](#), Nha Trang, Vietnam
- [Peninsula Hot Springs](#), Mornington Peninsula, Australia
- [Dr Fish pedicures](#), Langkawi, Malaysia
- [A visit to a hamam](#), Istanbul, Turkey



**Not all those who  
wander are lost**

J.R.R. Tolkien





# Time to wander and get lost



Set aside some time to head out of your accommodation with no destination in mind. Wander the streets, take random turns. Let fate guide your feet.

In Penang, we wandered through the back streets of Georgetown with no real purpose, and stumbled onto [the incredible street artwork of artist Ernest Zacharevic](#). In Sorrento, Italy, a wrong-turn which took us through a storm-water drain tunnel saw us emerge in [the gorgeous Marina Grande](#).

**Some of our wandering experiences include:**

- [Thanh Da Island](#), Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- [Swan River foreshore](#), Perth, Australia
- [A Sunday in Melbourne city](#), Australia
- [Early morning in San Marco](#), Venice, Italy



# To market, to market



The markets of any destination are an opportunity to see the day-to-day commerce of that culture in action. Colour, texture, action, drama...markets have it all.

From the huge food/clothing/goods markets of South East Asia, to the more specialist craft and flea markets, or local farmers' markets, there is bound to be a market in any destination that appeals.

Market shopping in many destinations offers an opportunity to hone your negotiation skills, while bagging a bargain souvenir to take home.

## Some of our market experiences include:

- [Tan Dinh Markets](#), Saigon, Vietnam
- [Paddington Markets](#), Sydney, Australia
- [Open air street markets](#) in Vietnam
- Chelsea Markets, New York City
- [Ben Thanh Market](#), Saigon, Vietnam
- [Southbank Sunday markets](#), Melbourne, Australia





# Night vision




Everything looks different in the dark, so don't retire to your accommodation as the sun sets. Instead, see that as the starting gun for some night-time adventures.

Explore the streets, see lightshows or fireworks, find out what the locals do after dark. Many towns or cities have a healthy night-market culture. Or perhaps take a night walking tour?

## Some of our nighttime experiences include:

- [The Marina lightshow](#), Singapore
- [The Burj Khalifa](#), Dubai
- [A big night out in Pompeii](#), Italy
- A ghost tour of Port Arthur in Tasmania, Australia
- [White Night](#), Melbourne, Australia





Climb the mountain not to plant your  
flag, but to embrace the challenge,  
enjoy the air and behold the view.  
Climb it so you can see the world, not  
so the world can see you.

David McCullough Jr.



# Get high



If there is a way to get up high while we're travelling, The Fairlie Entourage is there. Towers, church domes, chairlifts, bridges... Ascending to a place where you have an almost aerial view over your location helps make sense of the geography of your surroundings, and offers a big picture perspective that you don't get while you're at street level.

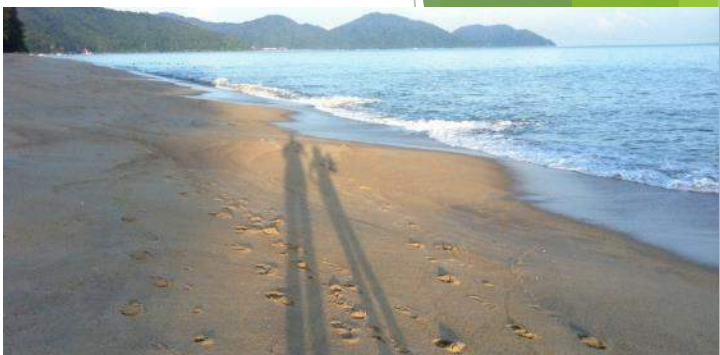
But often, the method of getting high involves a lot of stairs. So many stairs that I like to think of travel as [the ultimate stairmaster workout](#) (most of the experiences below are included in this post).

## Some of our climbing experiences include:

- Duomo di Firenze, Florence, Italy
- Pre Rup Temple, Angkor, Cambodia
- Pagoda of 10,000 Buddhas, Penang, Malaysia
- ['At the top' Burj Khalifa](#), Dubai
- [The Supertrees at Gardens by the Bay](#), Singapore
- Sydney Harbour Bridge Climb, Australia
- Duomo di Milano, Milan, Italy
- Statue of Liberty, New York City, USA
- The town of Positano in Italy
- Campanile do San Marco, Venice, Italy
- Marble Mountains, Da Nang, Vietnam
- [Eureka Skydeck](#), Melbourne, Australia



# Natural wonders

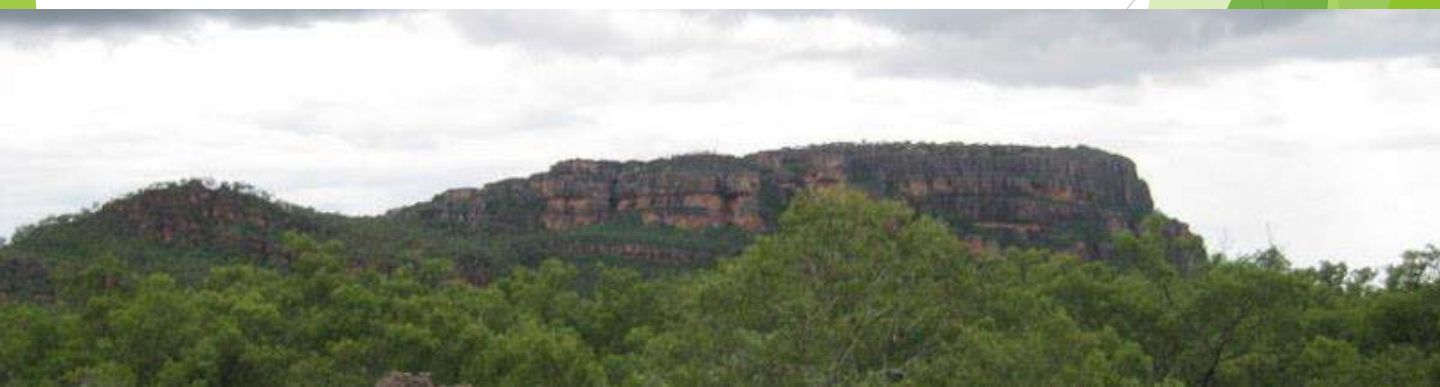


The earth is blessed with natural ecosystems and landscapes more beautiful than anything humankind could make. And in most locations of the world, a nature experience is never far away.

From Kakadu wetlands teeming with fauna to the unimaginable blue of Mediterranean waters; from the pristine environment of Far North Queensland's rainforests to the rugged drama of Vietnam's Halong Bay; we've been in awe of the wonders of this planet.

**Some of our natural wonder experiences include:**

- [Mangrove ecotours](#), Langkawi, Malaysia
- [Kakadu National Park](#), Northern Territory, Australia
- [Aegean Sea](#), Turkey
- [Kings Park](#), Perth, Australia
- Uluru, Northern Territory, Australia
- [Halong Bay](#), Vietnam
- [Mossman Gorge](#), Queensland, Australia
- Great Barrier Reef, Queensland, Australia
- Cradle Mountain, Tasmania, Australia





**History is not a burden on  
the memory, but an  
illumination of the soul.**

**Lord Acton**



# Treasures from the archives



Museums, galleries, religious buildings and ancient ruins feature on every traditional travel itinerary. Going to Paris? You'll visit the Louvre. Stopping by NYC? Of course, you'll go to The Met.

Including these repositories of the world's treasures or the sites of ancient civilisations, is an important part of understanding the past (and therefore also the present). However, there is a danger that we can be so preoccupied with ticking off these institutions that we risk being 'museumed- or templed-out'.

My post about [how to tackle the world's great museums](#) includes tips on how to create a meaningful experience, rather than a blur of objects.

**Some of the places we've enjoyed the treasures of the past include:**

- [Ephesus](#), Turkey
- [Pompeii](#), Italy
- [The Emperors' Tombs](#), Hue, Vietnam
- [MONA](#), Hobart, Australia
- [The Smithsonian](#), Washington DC, USA
- [Angkor Wat](#), Cambodia
- [The Vatican Museums](#), Vatican City, Italy
- [Po Nagar Cham Towers](#), Nha Trang, Vietnam
- [Pinang Peranakan Mansion](#), Penang, Malaysia





## Your own travel itinerary checklist

Print out the page to follow and use it to check off your itinerary plans.

How many memorable moments are you creating?



# I'm creating memorable moments



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My plans for: .....




# Written and designed by Alison (Fairlie) Dennison of Feet on Foreign Lands

I'm a Melbourne-based blogger who loves to travel. And I love to tell others all about it too, to inspire them to create great travel itineraries for themselves.

At [Feet on Foreign Lands](#) I offer tips, advice and information to entertain and inspire, so you can pack your travel itinerary full of memorable moments.



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