



*Travel Industry Association*

# ***The Benefits Are Everywhere***

**The Personal Benefits of Travel  
And Taking A Vacation**

## Health Benefits

*“Voyage, travel, and change of place impart vigor.”*

*Seneca, 1<sup>st</sup> Century philosopher*

Taking vacations can improve health in several measurable ways. For example:

- An annual vacation can cut a person’s risk of heart attack by 50 percent.<sup>25</sup>
- Middle-aged men at high risk for coronary heart disease who take frequent annual vacations are 21% less likely to die of any cause and 32% less likely to die of their coronary heart disease.<sup>1</sup>
- Homemakers who vacation only once every six years or less have almost twice the risk of developing myocardial infarction or coronary death than do homemakers who take two or more vacations a year.<sup>2</sup>
- Blood pressure, heart rate, and levels of epinephrine – a stress hormone – decline on holidays of only one or two days.<sup>3</sup>
- Recuperation and improvement in exhaustion are facilitated by free time for one’s self, warmer (and sunnier) vacation locations, exercise during vacation, good sleep, and making new acquaintances, especially among vacationers reporting higher levels of work stress.<sup>7</sup>
- Travelers rate their overall health one full point higher (on a scale of 1 to 5) while on vacation. They also get three times more deep sleep after their vacation and sleep almost 20 minutes after their vacation.<sup>26</sup>

- Leisure has been found to contribute to overall well-being by helping people maintain both their physical and mental health. <sup>6</sup>
  - For example, a study of almost 20,000 Canadians showed that physically-active leisure has been found to directly contribute to higher levels of physical and mental health – especially during times of stress. Higher levels of participation in physically-active leisure – and travel is definitely physically-active leisure – also helped people suppress high levels of work stress. <sup>4</sup>
  - Another study of Canadians showed that there are long-term health benefits of using leisure as a coping mechanism during stressful times. <sup>5</sup>

## Relationship, Educational, and Cultural Benefits

*“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness...Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.”*

Mark Twain

- Women who take more vacations are more satisfied with their marriages.<sup>28</sup> That may be because:
  - At least four out of ten travelers feel more romantic on vacation (42%), and nearly one-third admit to making love more often on vacation (31%).<sup>26</sup>
  - It could also be due to the fact that over half of employed Americans say they come back feeling reconnected with their family after vacation (53%).<sup>29</sup>
- A clear majority of students who traveled on an international exchange program felt they had become more trusting, open-minded, flexible, confident, and tolerant as a result of their travel experiences. In addition, eight out of ten said that the primary benefit of these travels is a desire for more travel.<sup>11</sup>
- Eight out of ten affluent leisure travelers consider vacations to be very important to their wellbeing (82%) and it's easy to see why:
  - More than half feel more rested and relaxed when they return from vacation (52%), and almost as many state they sleep later on vacation (49%).<sup>26</sup>
- Even the anticipation of vacation travel generates an increase in positive feelings about one's life as a whole, family, economic situation, and health.<sup>22</sup>
- Life satisfaction also increases during vacation, and these effects continue after returning home, according to a study of employees at the University of Tennessee.<sup>3</sup>

- Patients who had previously appeared isolated and withdrawn at a Midwestern Veteran's hospital were able to have conversations after taking a vacation. In fact, staff reported that vacations appeared to “lift the aura of depression” that was part of the emotional trauma of dealing with prolonged illness.<sup>8</sup>

## Career and Productivity Benefits

*“Making yourself available 24/7 does not create peak performance; recreating the boundaries that technology has eroded does.”*

*Edward Hallowell, MD. Harvard Medical School*

Spending time away from the office – especially traveling – also provides numerous benefits for workers and their employers.

- Three out of four executives believe that vacations are necessary for them to prevent burnout (78%) or that vacations improve their personal job performance (75%). Nearly as many – two out of three – believe that vacations improve their creativity (68%).<sup>20</sup>
  - Indeed, an inability to take a break can lead to stress, burnout, and a greater likelihood of feeling betrayed and angry when things do not go well at work. Anxiety of top executives often translates into low morale and slumping productivity throughout the ranks.<sup>24</sup>
- Burnout decreases significantly during two-week vacations, according to researchers at Tel Aviv University.<sup>3</sup>
- Travelers experience a 25% increase in performance on vigilance tests after returning from vacation – travelers 45 or older show a 50% increase in performance.<sup>26</sup>
- There is also a positive relationship between vacations and intellectual functioning among women from 65 to 92 years old, according to a study by the South Coast Institute for Applied Gerontology.<sup>3</sup>

- Overwork costs employers about \$150 billion a year in stress-related absences.<sup>25</sup>
  - And the loss doesn't stop there: workers get no more done when they work 50-hour work weeks than when they work 40-hour work weeks.<sup>25</sup>
  - In fact, Europe, which ensures that workers get ample vacation time, had higher productivity growth than the United States in most years between 1981 and 2000.<sup>25</sup>
  
- There's a good chance the benefits of vacation will go straight to the bottom line. According to a study by American Express, more than a third of small-business owners say their best ideas – the ones that lead to business growth – come not at work but during their downtime.<sup>12</sup>
  
- Rather than detracting from work, vacationing and a having fulfilling life outside of work enhance business accomplishments, and several organizations – both within and outside the travel community – are taking note:<sup>12</sup>
  - PricewaterhouseCoopers tracks employees who have not taken enough vacation, sending reminders to them and their supervisors that they should do so.<sup>21</sup>
  - The Sheraton Hotel in Chicago is offering a “BlackBerry Check-In Program,” which allows guests to lock up their PDAs with the belief that doing so allows travelers to better focus on their business partners or families while they're traveling. Guests who lock away their PDA for 48 hours can receive a complimentary stay, room upgrades, dinner at the hotel's restaurant, and a map to encourage them to see and enjoy Chicago with their friends and families – rather than read emails on their devices.<sup>21</sup>
  - A Cincinnati-based maintenance-services firm found that after a liberal vacation policy went into effect, employee turnover dropped and employee morale and productivity rose.<sup>25</sup>

- During an extended vacation, steel workers reported more interactions and activities with their spouses and children. And one out of four of these workers felt that their work efficiency increased and that their jobs were more interesting after a vacation.<sup>3</sup>

## Other Important Facts

*“The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page.”*

*St. Augustine*

In the first Global Summit on Peace through Tourism, more than 450 world leaders of the travel and tourism community ratified an “Amman Declaration,” which recognized travel and tourism as a global peace industry. <sup>10</sup>

The right to annual vacations of a minimum duration is prescribed by law in 78 countries; some are so convinced of the necessity that there are penalties for deferring the vacation. <sup>3</sup>

One out of four American leisure travelers believe a vacation is a birthright (24%). <sup>26</sup>

One in four American leisure travelers would be willing to trade an increase in pay for an increase in vacation time (24%). <sup>26</sup> But even so, Americans get the least amount of vacation time among countries in the industrialized world – an average of 8.1 days after a year on the job and 10.2 days after three years, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In addition, the average American works one month more per year today than in 1976.

Business travel can be fertile ground for discovering creative ideas for work or even a new business, many travelers say. The reason travel spurs inspiration is the stimulus, said Jeannine McGlade, co-author of “Stimulated! Habits to Spark Your Creative Genius at Work.” “When you’re in a new environment, you have what we call ‘eyes wide open. It’s not the ‘same old, same old’ where you tend to get into a rut and aren’t alert to having a ‘spark moment.’ Things are different and fresh during travel. You’re seeing things from a different perspective and you’re really paying attention.” Excerpt from “Finding New Inspiration on Business Trips,” New York Times, March 25, 2008

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“And that’s the wonderful thing about family travel: it provides you with experiences that will remain locked forever in the scar tissue of your mind.” Dave Barry

“I have found out that there ain’t no surer way to find out whether you like people or hate them than to travel with them.” Mark Twain

## Resources

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