'We travel not to escape life, but for life not to escape us'

Americans leave 429 million vacation days unused every year. As a nation we're taking a week's less vacation annually than we did 15 years ago.

Sufficient time away from work is vital to their health. Should you happen to use that time off to travel, you'll likely boost your health and happiness even more.

Here are five reasons why:
1. **Planning a vacation increases your sense of well-being.**
A [2002 study](#) by professors at the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom found that we are happiest when we have a trip coming up. People who have a vacation on the horizon have a greater sense of well-being, and feel better about their health (as well as their family life and economic situation), than people who don't. In fact, according to [2014 research](#) from Cornell University, people derive more happiness from anticipating a travel experience than from anticipating possession of something they're going to buy or acquire.

2. **Vacationing regularly reduces your chance of a heart attack.**
The landmark [Framingham Heart Study](#) found that men who didn't take a vacation for several years are 30 percent more likely to have heart attacks. Women who take vacations only once every six years are almost eight times more likely to have heart attacks. [Another milestone study](#), sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, found that men who take vacations regularly are 21% less likely to die of any cause and 32% less likely to die of heart disease.

3. **Getting away improves your emotional state.**
Women who vacation less than once every two years are more likely to suffer from depression and stress than women who vacation at least twice a year. That's a finding from a [2005 study](#) conducted by the Marshfield Clinic in Wisconsin. And a 2013 [Stress in America survey](#) by the American Psychological Association found that vacations reduce stress by removing you from environments and activities that are sources of stress.

4. **Vacations can catch you up on sleep and exercise.**
While a business trip can upend your sleep patterns and exercise regimen, a leisure trip tends to get your muscles moving—whether you're walking all over Paris or stand-up paddle boarding on Lake Tahoe—much more than when you're sitting in an office chair all day. It also gives you the opportunity to catch up on sleep.

5. **Travel experiences lead to greater long-term well-being than material purchases.**
Material goods—cars, jewelry, electronic devices—tend not to improve with age, and thus satisfaction with material purchases tends to decrease over time, whereas rewarding experiences grow richer over time as they become embellished in memory. Over time you might want to trade in your car, but you wouldn't want to trade in a vacation, since that would entail the loss of memories and thus the loss of a part of yourself. All of this is why a [2010 Cornell study](#) found that having travel experiences leaves you happier in the long run than buying things.