

# WHAT TRAVEL TEACHES YOU ABOUT WHAT YOU ACTUALLY WEAR

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When you travel for a month or more, you quickly learn to pack light. One suitcase, maybe two, and suddenly you're making choices: what will I actually wear? What's comfortable? What works for multiple occasions? You become a master of mixing and matching, of layering, of making do. In the process you discover something surprising: it's enough. You don't feel deprived. You feel free.

So why, back home, do our wardrobes spill over with clothes most of which we never wear? Because at home, we're not just getting dressed. We're building identities, chasing belonging, and trying to quiet an anxiety that never quite goes away.

## Clothing and the quest for belonging

We all want to feel like we belong. It's one of our most basic human needs. From the moment we're old enough to notice social cues, we start shaping ourselves, visually and behaviourally, to fit in. Clothes become a kind of language, a way to signal who we are, or who we want to be, or where we want to belong.

It's no coincidence that so many of our wardrobe choices aren't made based on comfort or practicality, but **aspiration**. We buy outfits for the job we hope to get. The body we hope to have. The version of ourselves we hope to one day become. We dress to project confidence, competence, creativity, even if we don't feel those things inside.

## Marketing knows exactly how to press that button

Fashion and lifestyle marketing thrives on this emotional terrain. It tells you that with the right outfit, you'll finally feel powerful, admired and accepted. That message hits a very old nerve. We don't just buy clothes, we buy the feeling of being enough. That's why so many of our purchases are made on impulse.

That little rush you feel when you hit "add to cart" or when you swipe your card, it's dopamine, your brain's reward chemical. In moments of anxiety, stress, or self-doubt, shopping offers a quick hit of pleasure and control. It feels like progress, even if it's not. But over time, those impulse buys pile up. Our wardrobes become cluttered with unmet expectations and unfulfilled identities.

## Travel forces us to do the opposite

When we travel, we're suddenly faced with strict limitations: weight limits, suitcase space, unpredictable weather, unfamiliar terrain. We don't have the luxury of overpacking our insecurities. We have to choose what's **essential**. We rely on creativity instead of consumption. We re-wear outfits without shame. We prioritise comfort, function, and personal style over trends or image.

And most of us find, to our great surprise, that we thrive! Feeling less burdened and more present, we stop thinking so much about what we look like and start noticing **how we feel**.

## So what are you really holding onto?

At home, you give yourself permission to accumulate, to keep buying, keep storing, keep hoping that the next purchase will be the one that changes everything. But when your wardrobe is overflowing and you still feel like you have "**nothing to wear**," the problem isn't the clothing. It's the disconnect between what you own and who you truly are.

We hold onto clothes that represent the past, the imagined future or a version of ourselves we think the world will accept. But the cost is clutter, decision fatigue, and the nagging sense that we're never quite enough.

Because in the end, it's not really about the clothes. It's about what we've been taught to believe the clothes give us. No outfit can deliver what self-acceptance does. Letting go of the excess is a practical choice as well as a quiet rebellion against a world that keeps telling you you're not enough. Maybe the most radical thing you can do is to **live with less**, wear what you love and show up as yourself without waiting for the perfect outfit to make it okay.