

**Where is your next travel destination?
“Going where the climate suits my clothes...”**

By Jill Matlow, Feature Writer, Wall Street Dead aHead Family Member



Photo courtesy of pixabay.com

Summertime, and the livin' is easy. Well, maybe not so much these days but who doesn't love a great vacation? Seems like everyone is trying to make up for lost travel time, especially since so many of our plans were put on an indefinite hold during the pandemic.

As someone who put off traveling for many years when I worked as a consultant in pharmaceutical advertising, my motto today is “no time like the present”. The older I get, the more I also embrace “if not now, when?” (to quote Rabbi Hillel) when it comes to pulling the proverbial trigger to get the ball rolling for planning a vacation.

Once we finally commit to planning a vacation and picking a time to travel, the choices of where to go (and how to get there) can be downright overwhelming. Domestic, international, beach, mountains, car, train, plane, ship, bus...where to even begin?

There are other factors that come into play too. Do you enjoy traveling with friends? Family? Opting for solo trips? Group travel? Do you prefer lounging on the beach 24/7 or a vacation filled with physical activity and/or sightseeing?

Back in the day (and before the internet), travel agents were all the rage. It was so helpful and reassuring knowing there was a third party who could take care of all the time-consuming details for us. These days and with the internet at our disposal, it's a lot more prudent to be "left to our own devices" where we can pick and choose every aspect of our trip. But with that, comes a lot more work and planning. Fortunately, we still have the option of relying on travel professionals to do the legwork for us if need be.

I personally like being "in the driver's seat" and as a self-proclaimed ambivert (as we all know from my previous [article](#)), I realize that I love group travel but also love spending half of my vacation solo. There are definitely pluses and minuses to both scenarios but I've found that combining the two makes for the most perfect vacation, at least for me. I admit to being a bit particular (really?) when it comes to traveling and that's why the solo option is ideal.

Case in point: I'm an early riser and find that I have most of my energy during the day, so by nighttime, I'm game for a relaxing dinner and drinks before "turning in" around 11pm. Speaking of early (and even though I have the TSA pre-check), I still like to arrive (and relax) at the airport instead of sweating it out en route. Are you the type of traveler running through an airport as they're closing the gate? That gives me anxiety just thinking about it! Inevitably, when that last-minute scenario happens, you can be sure to encounter the security lines wrapping around the block too.

No thank you!

Looking back, what has been one of your most memorable vacations? For me, it was a hiking trip I took to Norway last summer. Just like Carrie Bradshaw who fell in love with NYC in *Sex and the City*, I fell in love with Norway and the beautiful fjords. As an added bonus, I decided to visit Denmark and Sweden after my hiking trip, which were both amazing countries—not to be missed. It was also super convenient to be able to take the train from Denmark to Sweden. I highly recommend visiting those countries!

Enough about me, what type of traveler are YOU? Which types of vacations do you prefer? What has been your favorite vacation so far or is it one you haven't taken yet? It was time for me to journey into the minds of my fellow WSDaH Family members to hear about their travels and perhaps pick up some recommendations along the way.

Dust off your passports, buckle your seatbelts and prepare for takeoff...

"I am lucky enough to have been to Europe multiple times in my life.

My first trip out of the States was visiting Ireland in 2004 for my friend's wedding. They got married in a town named Carrick-on-Shannon that was so small, by the end of the week everyone knew who we were. So many highlights, but if you can visit any of these smaller towns on the Shannon River, taking a boat tour is a lovely way to spend a day.

This was also where we quickly learned about the accommodating nature of the Irish. We took a bus trip to the Cliffs of Moher, which I highly recommend. When we got back into town, instead of dropping us off where he was 'supposed to', the bus driver asked what bed and breakfast we were staying at and dropped us off there instead. As a lifelong New Yorker, my first thought here was 'Never, ever would this happen in NY'.

We were excited to see Dublin, specifically the pubs, but upon entering the first one, did we hear classic Irish music? No, we heard a Britney Spears song. It was very disappointing. I will say if you're in Dublin, definitely do the Guinness Factory tour. The tour ends on the top floor of a bar with 360-degree floor-to-ceiling glass windows so you can have a great look at Dublin from there while enjoying the most delicious Guinness you've ever had in your life where a bartender will lovingly craft a shamrock into the perfectly poured foam head.

Galway, specifically Quay (pronounced Key) Street, seemingly has all the bars and restaurants spilled into cobblestone streets. Singers and musicians adorned the streets, creating the beginnings of a soundtrack filled in by all the pub-goers. Enjoying a cool beer outdoors on a sunny day is one of life's finer pleasures. If you can combine that with Quay Street, so much the better.

In 2010, my soon-to-be wife Pamela and I planned a trip to see her friends in London and then jaunt over to Paris. A flight delay only added to this magical trip. We ended up stuck in Iceland for the day and quickly realized that perhaps Iceland had more to offer in the 5 hours we'd be stuck there than its airport. Enter the Blue Lagoon—conveniently located only 25 minutes from the airport. The Blue Lagoon, a geothermal spa, is like being in a hot tub created by nature. Additionally, the silica mud (white, you'll be standing on it) somehow has skin-healing qualities. I noticed after putting it on my arms over some mosquito bites that the bites healed up MUCH quicker than normal. We've been itching to make a 'proper' trip to Iceland ever since.

In the UK, admittedly touristy but great, riding the open-air bus tour in a city you don't know is actually quite lovely. Learn about the city, hop off the bus when a place strikes your fancy. We also did a Fat Tire (slow biking with a tour guide) Tour of London.

Paris is obviously beautiful and IMO should be on everyone's bucket list if you've never been. In addition to going to the top of the Eiffel Tower, we 'did as the Parisians did' and got ourselves some cheese, bread and wine and created our own little picnic close by. We did a Fat Bike Tour here as well. My wife and I are okay with going to places off the beaten path. We got off the Metro somewhat randomly and just walked around the city. Ended up in a huge open square and BOOM, there was the Louvre, right in front of us. Allowing yourself to get a little lost in a beautiful city has its perks.

In 2012, Pam and I spent 5 nights in Positano (on the beautiful Amalfi coast) for our honeymoon. Towns built into mountains on the water. Lots of walking and steps (to work off our daily gelato habit) to get down to the main area of town. Eating Italian food in Italy kinda ruined Italian food for me everywhere else. We spent the last 2 nights in Rome, and in addition to famous places such as the Coliseum, just walking around Rome, you'll encounter places/pieces of buildings that have been there forever.

In 2013, Pam encouraged me to take an International trip with my Dad. Like me, he had the travel bug, but hadn't yet been to Europe. We decided on Switzerland and for simplicity's sake, we signed up with a tour bus company, Globus. Switzerland is just beautiful (even their rest stops are picturesque, complete with tremendous mountains and sprawling lakes). One of our highlights was going to a restaurant with great food and more live music—complete with yodeling and people playing the alphorn.

Inspired by our first trip, my Dad and I visited Germany next in 2015. This time, we chose to 'vacation like Pam and I do' which meant no tour bus, a lot of metros and walking. Fun but tiring for my then-70 year old Dad. We hit up a new beer garden every night and learned about the Radler—half beer, half lemonade, all delicious. It was both of our drinks of choice for the trip. Watching people surf on a river in a huge park in Berlin was pretty awesome as well.

Those last two trips serve as the backdrop to some of my best memories with my Dad who unfortunately passed away in 2020.

I look forward to our next trip to Europe, which this time will include taking our two boys so they too can experience the joys of traveling abroad!"

[Brian Murphy](#), Founder, [Murph Consulting](#)

"One of our family's highlights of summer vacations was a weeklong cruise with Royal Caribbean to Alaska starting and ending in Vancouver in August of 2023. My wife Nicki and I have three amazing daughters: Kaelyn 10 and Mya and Paige, 7-year-old identical twins. We were a bit hesitant to book this trip due to the more adventurous nature of the cruise and potential for not so warm weather. The trip began in Vancouver which is a bustling city filled with views of the water and nearby mountains. The sendoff from the harbor was memorable as we navigated through the city and under bridges to the eventual wilderness of the Pacific Northwest. Our first day was at sea where we were able to explore the amenities, restaurants and activities aboard the ship.

On day 2 we docked in Sitka and touched land for only a short while before boarding a smaller boat for our excursion to an island for a traditional Alaskan bake, a wildlife search that included breaching whales, sea otters, and sea lions! Subsequent stops included Juneau and Ketchikan. We saw bears, jumping salmon, bald eagles and learned about the indigenous culture. We took a helicopter ride to the Mendenhall Glacier which felt like a trip to the moon. (Glacier water is tasty BTW.)

Another major highlight was not a stop, but rather a quiet and slow journey down the fjord culminating with an about face at the glacier. To see this untouched and ancient attraction from the comfort of your own stateroom or the observation deck on the 11th story of the ship was remarkable. Heading home we saw glimpses of the Alaskan 'skyline' of snow-covered mountain peaks. Sharing this with our kids was an awesome experience and we look forward to another trip that will include more land touring and getting further north into our country's largest and most sparsely populated state.

Moral of this story is take the trip and don't fret on the what ifs."

[Ryan Spear](#), President, [Spear Travel Group](#)

"I am sitting in the airport in Las Vegas experiencing a flight delay trying to process what just happened. Although I go to Vegas every summer to play in the World Series of Poker, this trip to the desert was just different. With the help of our old nanny, in-laws and travel baseball families, we were able to get away for 5 days without our 10 y.o. twins for a much needed escape. In the group was my brother-in-law, his wife Karyn and my wife Sarah, who introduced me to this music in 2001 shortly after our first date. Although I had seen Jerry one time (Giants Stadium 1994 with Traffic) it was not until I became part of my wife's family that I was fully indoctrinated and got on the bus. And it has been nonstop since, with countless trips to follow The Dead and Dylan in the midwest, Further and Ratdog shows at the Beacon and an amazing weekend at Fare Thee Well in Chicago.

I'm sure that many of you have seen pictures and videos that have surfaced during the Sphere run so far. They truly do not do it justice and I think that if you are on the fence, you just need to take the plunge. Sure you will be in 100+ degree heat, but you will spend most of the day either at the pool or in the air conditioning. With the early start times, it is hard to plan meals, but that didn't stop us. We had some amazing meals at: Vegas's Chinatown (Kabuto Edomae), a great steak dinner at STK in the Cosmopolitan, a wonderful lunch at China Poblano and a full session at the Caesars Bacchanal Buffet where we took down enough lobster claws and snow crab to last a lifetime.

At the shows we met up with a bunch of friends and I spent some time getting to know WSDaH Family member Jim Redpath during a set break. It was also a reunion of sorts as I connected with a law school classmate and also a fraternity brother from college—folks that I met 25-30 years ago when I was still listening to 80s hair bands while they were trading tapes of GD shows from the 1980s. We sat next to the same family from Reno (although originally from New York) at all three shows and our section was very friendly. I must brag about how good my seat was as I was in Section 206 in the exact center of the Sphere.

Without giving anything away, the shows were just marvelous and we all felt lucky just being in the room where it happened. The bromance brewing between Mayer and Jeff Chimenti is really taking this band to another level. They are just dialed-in telepathically right now. My wife literally had the biggest non-stop smile on her face for all 12 hours that we stood dancing and singing over the 3 shows. And Wow were those special effects amazing. They never took away from the music while transporting you throughout the galaxy, from Haight Ashbury to outer space and then back again. There were fitting tributes to Bill Walton all weekend. The Saturday show was the best, as we heard family favorites and a myriad of Robert Hunter songs about poker. I don't want to give away too many more details in case you plan to go. We could not have asked for anything more. I plan on being back in Vegas in July for the World Series of Poker Main Event, so I think another trip to the Sphere will be in order. Unless I am sitting plush with a Royal Flush at the final table.

[Scott Seamon](#) Managing Director & General Counsel, [Dexia](#)

"I spent 2 weeks volunteering in Israel with [Israel Food Rescue](#). Their mission is to provide agricultural relief to farmers in Israel since the Oct. 7 attack at the Nova festival and other locations in and around the northern and southern borders of Israel. Prior to the 10/7 Hamas attack, Israel's primary source of farm workers came from Thailand, and some Palestinians. The farms are owned by Jewish families, many 2nd and 3rd generation family farmers.

On October 8, the Thai workers fled the country, and the Palestinians were not allowed to return to work. This made up 90% of the farmers' work force.

The need was immediate, and within several weeks, [Israel Food Rescue](#) was born. Eggplants, loquats, plums—Oh My! A loquat is a cross between a pear and an apricot, and oh so sweet, we ate them right off the trees. I spent most of my time at one loquat farm where we harvested and boxed them for local sale. Our group 'thinned' apricot trees (decreasing the amount of fruit on the tree, so when ripe, the amount of fruit doesn't weigh down the branch) and pruned plum trees, where we removed twigs and branches to allow for more sunlight.

[Israel Food Rescue](#) brings in volunteers from all over North America. The camaraderie amongst the volunteers was amazing. I met volunteers from Canada, Hong Kong, France, England, as well as local Israeli residents.

My trip was amazing and gratifying. It felt like the least I could do."

[Nancy Dainesi](#), Happily Retired

"I started cruising in 1988 when I was 9 years old, as my grandparents took me to Alaska on the Royal Viking Star. The next summer at age 10, I went on the Royal Princess, formerly known as the Love Boat, out of England, getting to see Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, and Amsterdam and witness the changing of guards at Buckingham, the flowers at Tivoli Gardens, and the eye-opening poverty in Russian. By age 10 I knew both traveling and cruising would not only be things that I wanted to experience myself but also to share with my own family one day.

I stopped traveling with my family when high school had ended, but had taken 8-9 cruises by then and established that Alaska was my favorite place on earth and a Royal Caribbean ship, for the time being, would be my favorite way of doing it. In the last 6 months, I have taken 3 Caribbean cruises, out of Miami, Cape Canaveral, and Bayonne.

So how did I become a regular on Caribbean cruises to the same place every time? And why would I want to travel in a tiny room, on a packed ship, fighting for pool chairs while seeking to maximize my enjoyment with both inferior entertainment and food?

The answer came to me on a 2018 sailing on Anthem of the Seas out of Bayonne. We were now staying in an Owners Suite and had a concierge helping us with reservations, but from time to time I would see a family or group of people being escorted around the ship with a Royal Caribbean representative. I just assumed that they were high rollers in the casino but on the last day of that trip I learned what was really going on there.

In 2016, Royal Caribbean Cruise line rebranded a handful of suites and lofts on their boats and added what is now known as Star Class to their largest and most luxurious ships and the individuals walking these groups around the boat were part of the Star Class program and known as 'Genies.' I decided on the last day of that trip, to try this for my 40th birthday in 2019.

Walking into this suite took my breath away, and before the trip ended, I booked our next 2 Star Class trips.

The job of a Genie is to make every one of your wishes come true. About 8 weeks before your cruise, you will get a funky survey in the mail with questions like, 'If you could dine with any 3 people, living or dead, who would it be and why.' Four weeks before your trip, your assigned Genie reaches out over email, and you can commence planning as much or as little as you wish. Your Genie will fulfill any dining, spa, and entertainment wish you have, so here is a small list of unique wishes that Royal Caribbean Genies have granted me over the years:

- *The ability to custom order whatever you want for any meal*
- *For my 40th birthday, I had a cocktail party in my cabin and the lead guitarist from the We Will Rock You production played a 45-minute set of acoustic Queen and requests in my cabin.*
- *The nicest suites have hot tubs on the balconies. Bring a JBL, look out at the ocean, turn on Jerry.*
- *On a private tour of the bridge, the captain let my 7-year-old son sit in his chair and 'steer the ship'*
- *In December, my Genie woke up at 6am to wait in line and assure me a seat in the poker tournament that night*

So, why do I still choose cruising? Star Class. The Ship is the new destination, not the islands. The ports do not even matter anymore. Most only want to spend the day on the beach, so which island and which beach matters little—as they are all beautiful—and with a little effort on the internet you can identify and explore the most beautiful and remote places on any of these islands.

I cannot recommend it enough for families with small kids."

[Mark Roth](#), Principal & CEO, [Five Percent Equities](#)

There's a big world out there to discover and explore. Tell me, where are you headed next (and with whom)? Are you going where *"the water tastes like wine?"*. Can't wait to hear about all your upcoming travel adventures and long strange trips...