

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente



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Around the World in 80 Years - Part 1

Hey guys... Alessandro already mentioned me briefly in a previous post, and he was gracious enough to invite me as a regular guest contributor.

It will be my pleasure to share some of what I've learned on my travels with you, and I hope you'll take a minute to join the discussion on the forum as well...

...If you have any comments or questions, that's the best place to get in touch.

This article will kick off a weekly series about my travels around the world (and about learning languages, of course) - but first, let me say a few words to introduce myself.

My name is Frank Florida, and I'm a so-called "perpetual traveler" - the modern version of a nomad.

I've been traveling the world for twelve years, and I intend to keep traveling for the rest of my life.

So far, I've been to over 300 cities in 50 countries, and I'm in South East Asia at the moment... I've also been to your beautiful country of Brazil five times, and I speak Portuguese.

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I actually hope to visit Brazil again later this year, it's one of my favorite places in the world.

The funny thing is - it was never my intention to travel the *whole* world.

I really just wanted to spend some time in Ecuador, because my family has a lot of friends from Guayaquil...

...And so I first went to South America when I was 16.

Once I had a taste of traveling though, I wanted more...

...And so I moved to the United States and attended an American High School, as part of one of those exchange programs that are so popular in Brazil as well.

I had an amazing experience, I finally perfected my English and made a lot of new friends there.

The only problem was - traveling can be very addictive!

In fact, I now sometimes joke that nobody should travel for more than 12 months if they ever hope to readapt to life back home...

I've met many travelers who were able to readjust to their old routine after about a year on the road...

...But anybody who stays out longer than that seems to get hopelessly addicted to the freedom this life style has to offer.

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Next to traveling, my biggest passion in life is learning new languages.

Even though I have Italian and French background, I grew up speaking nothing but German...

...But I always wanted to see more of the world, and so I decided to learn as many languages as possible.

I'm now pretty much functionally native in English, German, Portuguese and Spanish.

I'm pretty fluent in French and Indonesian, and I can hold my own in Italian and Malay...

...I also know some rudimentary basics of Japanese, Filipino, Dutch and Chinese, but I wouldn't say that I really "speak" any of those four.

I enjoy teaching languages as much as I like learning them, and so I started working as a language teacher when I was 13...

...That was in 1994, so I've been teaching languages (English, Portuguese, Spanish, German and French) for some 18 years now.

And so of course I wanted to get a degree in education, but I was determined not to get stuck in a college back home...

...I wanted to complete my studies while traveling.

Fortunately, I found a university that allowed me to complete all my semesters abroad, and I finally completed my last two semesters in Australia.

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Anyway, this post was just meant as a brief introduction for this series...

...I will say that life on the road is not always easy, and there have certainly been hard times.

It can be tough sometimes, trying to make a living in a foreign country where you don't know anybody and where you don't speak the language yet...

...But I'll also say that the good times more than make up for any hardship you might encounter, and I can't recommend this life style enough.

In the next edition of "Around the World in 80 Years", I will answer the question people ask me most frequently:

"You say you weren't born rich - how can you afford to travel so much... what's your secret?"

I will share this secret with you next...

Cheers,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 2

Hey guys,

I am back... And today I'm writing to you from the wonderful city of Chiang Mai, in the North of Thailand.

It's a very peaceful and serene place, surrounded by mountains and wonderful landscapes, but with a pleasant climate year-round...

...The perfect place for a writer... And, of course, for a linguist who likes to write.

But before I tell you more about life on the road, I'd like to say THANK YOU for all the wonderful comments that you posted on the blog last week!

I read them all and will do my best to reply to as many as possible.

In Part I of this series, I promised you to let you in on my secret - how is it possible to travel the world for years on end without being rich?

That's a good question... and it's something I was very intimidated by as well when I first started out.

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My parents have always had to work hard to make a living, and I didn't have a lot of savings when I first hit the road.

But I was determined, because I believe that if you have a good attitude, and you really want to achieve something - you can make it happen...

...No matter what it is.

In the words of the great poet Goethe:

"The moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now."

Or in more simple terms... Where there is a will, there is a way!

And I was committed... I was willing to do *whatever* it takes to find that way, and to make my dreams a reality.

Sure, I was scared...

...Scared to leave my life behind, scared of not seeing my friends and family for a year, and scared of running out of money in a foreign country.

But the thing I was probably most scared of was having to give up and go back home.

Heck... I didn't even know where I was going to get my laundry done abroad!

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But my desire for adventure was stronger than my fear... and there was literally nothing I wanted more than to be free... and to see the world!

Alright, I'm sure by now you're on the edge of your seat with anticipation, asking yourself - so what IS the secret, Frank?

How did you make it happen... how can I travel the world without a lot of money?

Well, there are really a million little secrets... and I will share them all with you in this series - no holds barred!

But the three most important ones are probably:

1. Leveraging the differences between the economies and currencies of different countries.
2. Working on the road - but the smart way! Ideally you want to work in wealthy countries that pay high salaries in strong currencies.
3. Budget travel - living on a shoe-string! Traveling in developing countries where currencies are cheap and the cost of living is much lower than in Brazil or other strong economies.

I will talk about all of these in the next couple of articles in more detail, and I'll let you in on a couple of secrets that even most experienced travelers don't know. But for now, let me give you an example.

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Step 1

I have met many Brazilians on my travels who found a way to work in wealthy countries, where they earn a relative fortune...

...Even working simple jobs, for example in the hotel industry or in carpentry.

Because hey - if you get paid in Dollars, Pounds, Euros or Yen, the money will go FAR elsewhere later!

And what most people don't know: Even the Brazilian Real is MUCH stronger than most currencies in Asia, Africa and South America, for example.

The real trick, however, is to be FRUGAL in the wealthy countries... Because they tend to be expensive, too!

Step 2

Once you've saved up a fair chunk of change, take your bag of money to a country where it's worth five TIMES as much as where you made it.

In Thailand, for example, you can rent a perfectly decent hotel room for less than \$5 per night, and have delicious Thai food for \$1 per meal.

There are dozens of countries like that, and it's even cheaper if you're traveling on the Euro or the Pound!

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If you do this right, you can work for 6 months per year and travel the rest of the time...

I've even met people who only work 4 months per year and travel for 8... and in some cases even less!

And hey, even while you're working...

You're still in a foreign country, experiencing an exotic culture, making new friends and having an exciting adventure...

It's absolutely incredible!

I'll have to wrap it up here for today, but I'll be back next week - and in the next article I will show you some SPECIFIC ways to make this happen.

I will tell you exactly what jobs will PAY you to travel... even if you only have a Brazilian passport...

...And how to get paid in dollars... and, of course, I will tell you where to find these jobs.

I'll talk to you again soon.

Cheers,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 3

Hey guys!

I just got off the phone with an old friend that I haven't seen in several years...

And we had a really fascinating conversation that I wanted to share with you today.

We talked about traveling the world, and about the big question - when is the best time to go?

You see... Back when we were both still in school, our friends all had very different ambitions and dreams.

Some wanted to stay at home and have a good career, so they could make a lot of money and their biggest goal was to start a family, buy a big house and drive a Mercedes.

Others, like me, were never really all that interested in mansions and fast cars.

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Sure, it is important to always have enough money...

...But we believed that life was made up of time, and not of things...

...And that no amount of material wealth could ever replace a rich life, full of interesting experiences.

If given a choice between a car and a round-the-world plane ticket, we would choose the latter without blinking an eye.

Well, so far, so good and I think both of these choices are absolutely valid.

Being a “digital nomad” isn’t for everybody, and some people don’t really feel the desire to see the world... and that’s fine.

I think the most important thing in life isn’t to travel, it is to follow your heart...

...And if your heart tells you to stay at home and raise a family, that’s what you should do.

And if your heart demands you roam the planet having adventures, then you should do that too.

There was, however, a third group of people that had a dilemma...

...They felt stuck somewhere in the middle between the other two.

Yes, their biggest dream was to travel the world but they were scared to take the plunge.

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They wanted to experience great adventures, too, but they were also afraid of messing up their CV, and of ruining their chances for a good career in the future.

They wanted to go, but they wanted to go when the time was right.

This third group is the one I want to talk about today, because this group often falls into a very common trap: the “someday, maybe” predicament.

And if you have ever procrastinated on anything, if you’ve ever put something off for later, you know what I’m talking about...

...And who hasn’t? We all do it sometimes.

The problem with putting off our plans to travel, however, is that there will always be a very compelling reason not to go NOW.

When we’re in school, we say: “I’ll go after I graduate.”

After graduation, we say: “Now I’m in a relationship... I don’t want to leave my love behind.”

Two years later, we may be single again, but now we’re stuck in a three-year rental contract.

And once that contract is up, we’re just about to start a new job.

And on and on it goes, year after year, decade after decade...

Thus for many people, “someday, maybe” becomes the bane of their existence...

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...Because the time will pass, whether you do the things you want to do or not and eventually we will all be looking back on our lives, thinking about the things we've done or thinking about the things we could have done.

So the big question remains... when IS the best time to travel the world, Frank?

The answer is, there will never be a time when everything is just perfect, and all the conditions are just right. Leaving your entire life behind will always involve sacrifices of some sort.

Believe me, I know how hard that can be because my own situation was no different.

When I first left my home country with nothing but some clothes in my backpack and burning wanderlust on my mind, I had to leave my entire life behind!

I had just finished renovating the apartment I was living in; I was playing in a rock band that was just becoming more and more successful...

I had a girl-friend who had to finish her degree before she could travel, and of course I had friends and family back home that I wouldn't see for at least a year!

Honestly, it really wasn't a "good time" to go. I had a good life back home, and leaving would surely mean giving up a lot of good things that I had been blessed with.

But here is the good news, guys: Once you're on the road, life will more than make up for anything you had to sacrifice!

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Sure, you have to say good-bye to your best friends, but you will make more new friends on the road than you could ever imagine right now.

You will make experiences that you would not trade in for a million dollars and you will go places and see things that you will remember fondly until the day you die.

One night, about two years after I first started traveling, I was sitting on a beach in Spain, on the marvelous island Formentera in the Mediterranean Sea.

With the sand dunes behind us and the vast waters ahead, I saw two falling stars that night and I didn't even make a wish.

I only remember thinking that I was as happy as I had never been in my life and if I was to make a wish, it would have been for more adventures like the one I was living right that moment.

I know I promised you guys to tell you more about how to make money on the road, and to give you some specific tips about jobs that pay you to travel and I will share these tips with you in my next article.

But today, I just had to share this conversation with you, because it was such an eye-opener for me when I first heard about the "someday, maybe" trap.

And ever since, I've come to one conclusion - it's always better to regret something you have done, than to regret something you haven't done.

So in answer to the question - when is the best time to travel the world?

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I will have to say the answer is "never" and therefore, the answer is "NOW."

Always the best.

Cheers,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 4

Hey guys - as promised, I will finally answer the great question today: What is the great secret of perpetual travelers?

What do they know that other people don't?

How can they afford to go on what seems to be a never-ending vacation...

...When everybody else can hardly even pay the bills back home, slaving away in an office building or a factory for decades?

This is really a good question, and it's one that had me stumped for years.

Before I hit the road, I had no idea how I was even going to afford my own car, leave alone the gasoline and the car insurance...

...How could I ever hope to travel very far from my home town for a long time, leave alone roam the entire planet for years on end?

It seemed impossible.

On the other hand, now that I know how to do it, I sometimes wonder... Why isn't everybody doing this?

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And even though in all honesty, I'm not going to tell you that it is the easiest thing in the world, it is definitely very doable and there are a million ways to pull it off.

I'm going to share some of these ways with you today.

1. English Teacher

I'm going to start with the most obvious job you can do abroad, especially given that you're studying this website and fluent enough to read my articles, this might be a very viable option for you.

In most countries in the world, there is a very high demand for English teachers.

Of course that's not a job you can do in places like Australia or Singapore, where English is the official language, but it's always an option in 90% of countries in the world and in some cases, it pays VERY well.

2. Cruise Ship Work

This is one of my favorite ways to travel the world and get paid for it...

...Can you imagine cruising around the five oceans, sunbathing on the deck of a luxurious ocean liner, and hopping off at every paradise beach you can think of...

...All while getting paid for it?

It's really amazing, but I have to give you a fair warning - some jobs on cruise ships are better than others.

Waiters, mechanics and chamber maids usually work 12 to 13 hours a day...

...Entertainers, musicians, librarians, dancers and photographers, on the other hand, have a lot of free time.

3. Hotel and Restaurant Industry

Just about any place you might want to visit on your travels is bound to have hotels and restaurants and those kinds of venues always need staff.

Just like teaching English, this one is pretty much a guaranteed job anywhere in the world if you're willing to do the work.

Jobs include waiter, cook, barman, doorman, concierge, bell boy, receptionist and many, many more. If you speak languages, you will find a job in this industry without any further qualifications.

4. Club Promoter

This is one of the most fun jobs I've ever had in my life...

...It essentially consists in partying all night, getting your drinks for free and talking to as many people as possible to get them into your club.

This is also another job where it's very helpful to speak languages, but if you're the extroverted type and like meeting new people, it's a great way to get paid...

...And not only to travel, but you actually get paid to party.

Simply talk to club managers and ask if they need someone to promote.

5. Flight Attendant

Similar to work on a cruise ship, you don't just make money at your destination, but you actually get paid to move from place to place.

I have friends who have seen the whole world working in this job...

...And while they said that it can be stressful sometimes with layovers and over-night flights, it always sounds like it is a blast when they describe it.

6. Carpentry and other Crafts

This is going to sound crazy, but - in the first world, blue collar work can often pay very well.

One of the highest paying jobs I've ever had was working the assembly line in a car factory!

I've also met many travelers who made a fortune working as carpenters or brick layers in Australia, New Zealand and Canada...

...And if you're really up for some rough physical work, you can join an oil rig or a fishing boat.

It's tough labor and not for the faint of heart, but the cash makes it all worth it.

7. Diving Instructor

This is one of the most popular jobs in the most beautiful destinations in the world.

Places like South East Asia, Egypt, the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands have dive spots like right out of National Geographic magazine.

If you get your PADI qualification as a Dive Instructor, you can live there and get paid to dive.

The above are some of the most popular ways to make money on the road, but there are many, many more...

...These are just to give you some ideas and inspiration.

In future articles, I will talk about each one of these jobs in more detail, and explain where you can find them, how much they pay and what countries offer the best opportunities in each of these fields.

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Thanks for reading...

I hope I was able to shed some light on some of the secrets of Perpetual Travelers and modern-day nomads...

Always the best and happy travels,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 5

Hey guys - Genki desu ka?

That's Japanese, and it means - "How are you?"

Japan will always hold a special place in my heart among all the countries I've visited on my travels.

It is one of the most exotic places a Westerner could choose as his getaway destination, and their culture is truly unique and very different from our own...

...So spending a few months in Nihon is sure to broaden your horizon in numerous ways.

But the first thing that always comes to my mind when I think of Japanese a very important life lesson I learned there...

...And it's probably not what you think!

You see, when I first arrived on the Archipelago of the Rising Sun, I did what I always do...

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...I took a couple of weeks to travel up and down the whole country and to choose my favorite city and I finally decided on Tokyo, where I ended up staying for a couple of months.

A few weeks later, however, I talked to a friend of mine from Nagoya...

...And what she had to say about my choice of residence really made me think.

Was she just trying to scare me, or was she serious?

Could it be true... was Tokyo really that dangerous?

If you're wondering what danger she warned me of...

...I am talking about the frequent earthquakes in Japan's capital and sure enough, during my several months in the country, I experienced at least one tremor every couple of weeks.

Quakes are really incredibly common over there, and it can be a scary experience!

In fact, one night as I woke up at two a.m. with my whole apartment moving and shaking around me, I really got to thinking about how fragile life really is.

And that was the biggest lesson Japan taught me: to live each day as if it was my last.

Or, in the words of James Dean: "Dream as if you you'll live forever... but live as if you'll die today."

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But of course I'm no Pollyanna, and I realize that life isn't always that simple...

It's not always possible to simply do what we want, and there are certainly complications in life that we have to take care of from time to time.

One of these complications that people ask me about frequently is the question of visas and I'll let you in on a couple of secrets about this topic today.

Of course you will always find travelers who simply work without having a visa and to be honest, it doesn't usually pose much of a problem.

I have yet to hear about anybody getting into trouble because of that kind of thing.

That said, I don't recommend you break the law, because there are certainly legal ways to do the same thing and here are some of them.

The easiest way to legally work in a foreign country is to get a work permit or temporary residency.

For Brazilians, this is easy in several South American countries

...But I also have a lot of friends from Brazil who were able to get a second passport from places like the EU or Japan, because their parents or grandparents had immigrated to Brazil from there.

Chances are, your ancestors came from other countries too and if so, this is something you might want to look into!

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Another way is to actually get sponsorship for a working visa from an employer in a foreign country.

You usually need the right qualifications for this kind of program, and covering every country where this is possible would probably go beyond the scope of this article...

...But there are always countries where foreign immigrants with the proper skills and education are welcome and in high demand.

Thirdly, there are actually a whole bunch of jobs where you don't need any residency or passport at all.

For example, if you work on a cruise ship, like I discussed in my previous article, you are working on the open sea, and you are therefore not inside the jurisdiction of any single country - this is by far the easiest way to travel and work at the same time without having to worry about legal complications.

A fourth way to legally work abroad is the so-called "Working Holiday Visa", and this is how I was able to live and work in Japan.

Unfortunately, Japan isn't currently offering this program to Brazilians, but New Zealand is!

<http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/stream/work/workingholiday/brazilwhs.htm>

And if you can get a second passport, as described above, a whole laundry list of other countries might open up to you based on the working holiday program...

...You can find out more about that here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Working_holiday

The above are just some of many ways one can go about legally finding work in a foreign country...

...What options you have to get a hold of a working visa or even a legal residency greatly depends on what country you want to visit.

So your best bet is to pick a place and then do research on the web about the specific requirements...

...As well as about programs offered by that country's embassies in Brazil.

Just trust me when I say: this is very possible...

I know hundreds of people personally who have found a solution to this problem... and where there is a will, there is a way!

Alright, enough of the rather dry topic of the "legal requirements" a traveler might run into as he roams from country to country...

...But I wanted to make sure I cover this issue, as it is a question that does come up rather frequently.

In the next article, I will let you in on a few more of my secrets, and talk a bit more about one of my favorite topics: "Location Independence".

Often abbreviated as LI, it simply means that you don't depend on any one location for making a living.

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While most people have to spend at least 11 months per year in the city where their job is, some travelers have cracked the code of being able to make money anywhere at any time.

They could even live on a deserted island or in a remote mountain village and still make as much money as in a big metropolis in the West.

How?

Stay tuned, I will tell you how this works in the next article.

Until then...

Always the best,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 6

"Do you want something from me, man?"

He angrily looked at me with glaring eyes, as if he was ready to fight for his life.

He must have been in his thirties, and he was wearing old, loose cotton pants and a wild, unkempt beard...

...And for a second, I thought he was going to attack me.

He was one of the guests at the hotel I'm currently staying at...

...And while I was waiting for the receptionist to bring my key, he suddenly emerged from his door and confronted me about hanging around in front of his room.

I told him that I was just waiting for the hotel staff...

...And as the expression on his face changed from defensive to confused, he stumbled back into his room, mumbling an incomprehensible apology.

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Now, I'm pretty used to meeting odd ducks out here from time to time, so I didn't give it any further thought...

...But as it turned out, I would meet this guy again... and our next encounter was even crazier!

But before I tell you what happened next, let me clue you in on today's topic... location independence!

You see, there are really two ways to travel the world.

One is working your way from place to place, always taking jobs in one country to save up, and then using that money to continue your travels to other places.

The other way to travel the world is to become a so-called "digital nomad".

Maybe you've read ads like this from time to time...

...A promise that sounds almost too good to be true, usually written in big red letters: "Make Money Online!"

The author promises you that you can turn your laptop into a money machine, and that you will be able to make a full time income (or more!) on the internet...

...And live anywhere in the world.

Maybe there's even a picture underneath the sales letter, of the author lying in a hammock on some paradise beach, with his laptop...

...*making paper!*

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If something sounds too good to be true, it usually is, right?

Well... not in this case!

There are certainly scammers out there and you have to be very careful whom you trust in this business...

...But working on the internet is very real in the 21st century.

There are hundreds of thousands of businesses who need help...

...And of course in this day and age, a lot of the work that needs to get done can be done on a computer.

If you have a job like that, it really doesn't matter whether you're in Brazil...

...Or in a ski resort in Colorado, on a beach in the Caribbean, or in a street café in Paris.

You simply do the work on your laptop, and then send the finished project to your client/employer via e-mail.

Voilà... You are now TRULY location independent and can live ANYWHERE in the world...

...All the while still making a full-time income.

This is truly a dream life style, and I know literally hundreds of people who already have jobs like that.

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In fact, these kinds of jobs are becoming more and more common...

...And in the United States, millions of people already use this model to work from home.

Yes, you don't have to get on a plane...

...You can also work online just to avoid rush hour traffic, and so you will never have to set an alarm clock again in your life!

"But how do I go about finding this kind of work? Can you help me to make money online, Frank? Can you, huh? Can you? Huh? Huh?"

No... unfortunately, I can't. I'm sorry, but this is only reserved for members of my very expensive private coaching club.

But if you give me your credit card number... Okay, okay - I'm just joking. ;-)

Yes!

The answer is ABSOLUTELY yes, anybody can build this kind of life style for himself, and I'm going to tell you exactly how to do it.

In fact, I've seen people do it over and over again...

...And that's why I'm absolutely SURE that it's also possible for YOU. And there are really two ways to do it...

The first way is to MOVE your current job onto the internet.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

You see... if you're currently working on the computer, then there is often no REAL reason why you should have to come into the office every day.

In many jobs, it would be just as possible to do the work from home... or from a beach somewhere, for that matter!

For a step-by-step guide on how to move your job out of the cubicle and onto the beach, including some recommendations for the inevitable conversation with your boss, I recommend you check out Tim Ferris's book "The Four Hour Work Week" ...

http://www.amazon.com/The-4-Hour-Workweek-Anywhere-Expanded/dp/0307465357/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1344246059&sr=8-1&keywords=four+hour+work+week

...It's a pretty good representation of this life style, and in fact - I should have written this book... but he beat me to the punch!

The second way is to simply look for work online to begin with.

There are hundreds of online portals where contractors (that's you!) can find work...

But at the moment, the five big ones where you will find most of the work are the following:

www.Guru.com
www.Elance.com
www.Odesk.com
www.Freelancer.com
www.vWorker.com

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

Those are so-called “freelancing marketplaces”, and you will find all kinds of jobs on there...

...Web development, graphic design, coding, customer support, writing, translation, accounting, sales and marketing, video production, and on and on...

...There are literally millions of jobs out there.

In the next issue of “Around the World in 80 Years”, I will tell you more about these jobs...

I will tell you how to apply for them and stand out from the competition, and how to find a job that actually pays WELL...

...Because not all of them do.

I will also tell you how to use your English skills to make money online, and I'll give you a whole bunch of tips and tricks to make sure your internet career will be a huge success.

Now I still haven't told you about the guy who almost attacked me at my hotel, and what his story has to do with making money on the road...

...But I'm just about out of space here, so I will have to leave that for the next edition.

I'll talk to you again soon - Always the best,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 7

Hey guys, I hope all is well...

...And I hope you're making good progress towards your goals!

Be that fluency in English, a trip around the world, or anything else you would like to achieve.

And the reason why I'm bringing this up today is that somebody recently accused me - jokingly, of course - of killing his productivity;

He said after reading my articles, he started to daydream of this lifestyle and stopped getting anything done!

At the same time, however, one of our readers made the exact opposite comment...

...She asked me about getting homesick, and about being far from the people we love most: close friends and family.

And that's a very good question...

...Because while some people are at home, dreaming about far-away lands...

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Fórmula Fluente

...Others are already abroad, and they're dreaming about the day of their return!

Some might simply say that the grass is always greener, and that it's simply human nature to want what we can't have.

However, this topic is really a little bit more complex than that... In fact, this is one of THE most difficult topics for travelers.

I always call this "the one great disadvantage of traveling" - and it can be more difficult to deal with than culture shock or visa issues:

I spend 99% of my time far away from my family and from my friends in my home country.

The good news is, however, that I now have probably 100 times more friends than I had when I first struck out on my own...

...And my new friends are scattered all around the world.

In fact, after a few years on the road, you will have many friends in almost every country you might ever want to visit!

And at that point, something really bizarre happens: going home would ALSO mean being far from many of the people you love the most!

In Brazil, for example, I have a second family...

...Several years ago, I met a Paulista in Barcelona, and we came to be very good friends.

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Fórmula Fluente

One day he invited me to go to Brazil together... completely out of the blue.

I still remember his exact words as if it were yesterday:

"Hey Frank, I'm going to Brazil next week... for Carnival, and to travel around for a few months. Do you want to come?"

That's one heck of a crazy proposition, but I slept on it for one night and then said yes.

And his family was so hospitable that I now consider them my own "second family"...

...In effect, I have a "second mum" in Brazil, and we still talk on Skype regularly.

And that is just one example among hundreds...

...In fact, some of my best friends in the world are right here in Thailand, while others are in Australia, Spain, Canada, Panama, and dozens of other countries.

And that also means that no matter how I slice it, and no matter where I go in the world... I will always be far from many of the people I love most.

The other side of this coin is that I will also always have many people I love around me... no matter where I am.

And that is a true blessing... something that nobody can ever take away from you once you've been on the road for a while!

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

Don't get me wrong... I always try to visit my family at least once a year, and I make sure we have at least a week or two to spend together.

But you know what?

The old saying that "absence makes the heart grow fonder" is absolutely true, and I'm now closer to my family than I have ever been before.

In fact, it's kind of nice to come home and have a good dozen people fight over who gets to pick you up from the airport, and who gets to take you out for dinner first. :-)

Nevertheless, one of the biggest blessings in today's world is the internet, and Skype of course...

...So whenever I want to speak to my family, a web cam can really help to "matar a saudade", as you say in Portuguese.

So yeah... this IS one of the hardest parts of traveling, and especially if you want to get into a relationship, you better pick a fellow traveler!

Long distance relationships are NOT fun... trust me on this one, I speak from experience.

But when you leave your friends in Brazil behind for a while, you will also make 50 TIMES more new friends in other places...

...Many of whom will end up being the closest ones.

And if you never hit the road, you miss out on all those friendships that you haven't made yet.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

In that spirit, I'll leave you with a quote by Will Rogers today: "A stranger is just a friend I haven't met yet."

You see, after so many years, it is very hard for me to think of people as anything other than future friends.

I hope that helps if you're hesitant about cutting your ties with your folks for a little while, and thanks for reading...

Cheers,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 8

Hey guys...

...Today I will tell you what I think is one of the deadliest poisons that has ever infected our society as a whole...

...But before I get into that, I'd like to once again say "THANK YOU!" for all your amazing comments, here on the blog and on the forum.

It's great to hear that so many people are sharing the dream, but more importantly, it also helps me to find out what you want to read about!

You see, after over a decade on the road, there are more things I could write about than would ever fit in a hundred blog posts...

...But the questions you ask in the comments let me know what you want to find out, and that way I can write about that specifically.

So please go ahead and reply to this post and let me know:

What are your biggest questions about traveling the world? What do you want the next articles to be about?

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

A couple of weeks ago I wrote about the three different groups of friends I had in school:

Some who wanted to travel, some who had no desire to do so, and some who were stuck somewhere in the middle.

And last week I got a big reminder just how big this third group really seems to be...

...One of my students posted a picture of a plane ticket on her Facebook wall, and the post blew up!

I mean, she got over 50 “likes” right away!

Now, I’m not entirely sure whether that’s just people’s deep rooted desire to travel the world, or if everybody just really needs a vacation right now...

...But I did read an interesting theory about that question once.

One of the resources I recommend most frequently to people who are just starting out is the “Lonely Planet” guide book series.

There is a book for just about every country you might ever want to visit, and these books cover everything you need to know...

...From vaccinations and visas you might need all the way to the cheapest hotels and restaurants at your destination.

And I remember reading something fascinating on their blog one day.

There was a post on their “thorn tree” that discussed people’s psychological desire to travel.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

Where does it come from? Why do so many people dream about seeing the world...

...Or at least about getting away from it all for a few weeks every year?

The author's theory was simple, and something I could totally identify with:

He speculated that we humans, as a species, never really ceased to be nomadic!

Sure, with the rise of the agrarian age we started to build houses and villages, and later towns and cities...

...We started to farm and plant instead of hunt and gather.

And in many ways, this has made our lives a lot easier.

But have our genes really changed in such a short time frame?

Is it really human nature to stay in one single place for years, or even for a life time?

Is it possible that this is actually as unhealthy as other unnatural behaviors our civilization has brought with it, such as working the night-shift, eating processed foods and polluting our planet?

According to the author of the article, this is not only the reason why we still feel such a strong longing to travel the world...

...In his view, it is much more problematic than that.

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He says that we should never have suppressed this strong drive to “Walk the Earth” as they say in Pulp Fiction...

...That we should never have ignored our desire to be truly FREE. And then he comes to a shocking conclusion:

He says that all human conflict, all our wars, our divorces, our neuroses and psychoses, our animosities and struggles, our dissatisfaction with life, our anguish and our angst...

...In other words, all the psychological disorders our civilization seems to have created...

...Stem from this unnatural behavior of staying in one place...

...And suppressing our urge to live the nomadic life that is encoded in our genes.

Is it true... what do you think?

Honestly, I don't know... I'm no anthropologist and I haven't seen a scientific study about the topic; I only read that article a long time ago.

But it's definitely something that rings very true to me personally...

I usually get itchy feet after about 4 months in a place, no matter how much I like it.

Once I've seen everything and been to all the hot spots a couple of dozen times each, the routine begins to catch up to me and I really need to move on!

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And that's one of the best feelings in the world...

I can just grab my backpack, and in 5 minutes I'm out the door and on my way to the next bus station, airport or ferry terminal...

...Off to new adventures!

The rush of having that kind of freedom is a big part of why I'm still living this life style after such a long time...

...And why I'm pretty sure that I will never settle down.

It feels like a huge weight is lifted off my shoulders every time and I feel FREE!

If you've read a few of my articles, then you know I like to quote people that have inspired me...

...Today I'll quote Tony Robbins, and I'll quote him twice.

My all-time favorite quote of his is this: "A ship in a harbor is safe... but that's not what ships are built for!"

And in line with this quote, there is another one I really like... it goes:

"You think adventure is dangerous? Try routine... it is lethal!"

And that's what I meant when I spoke of the "deadly poison" earlier. Maybe that's not even staying in one place!

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I think that might just work out really well for many people, and I certainly have lots of friends who seem to be very happy where they are born.

If they could live anywhere in the world, they would stay exactly where they are.

Routine, however, is another matter...

...And even if we don't travel, I think we really need to spice things up every once in a while and have some kind of adventure.

Otherwise, life can become awfully dull.

And of course I realize that this is not always possible...

I've certainly gotten caught up in a routine more often than I care to remember, despite my life style choices...

For example, I've mentioned before that I used to work in a car factory for a while to pay for one of my big trips.

That was really one big grind, and the only way out was the way through.

But for the most part, I make sure I at least try to keep the inspiration alive at all times.

Alright, I'm really curious now... what do you think about this theory?

Do you agree with the author I mentioned... are we still nomadic creatures, and is it a mistake to suppress our urge to travel?

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

Or do you think that's all a bunch of hogwash?

Cheers guys, keep living the dream and stay in touch.

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 9

Hey guys... I just met that guy from my hotel again! Remember, the one who almost attacked me a few weeks ago?

And I finally found out why he reacted the way he did...

...And some of the things he told me really made a big impact on me.

In fact, he is a fellow traveler on the path... he, too, has been traveling for many, many years.

And he, too, has no intention of ever returning to his home country.

Anyway - I was just about to leave my room, as that same guy stood in front of me again...

...But this time, he stood there with a beaming smile, greeted me happily and apologized profusely for the way he had reacted the first time we met.

He also explained to me that he had just spent months and months as a hermit in the mountains...

...Living alone, meditating all by himself and remaining in absolute silence for months.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

He had had no human contact... and he said he had to get used to speaking again!

I found that story fascinating, and so I told him: "Hey, I'm just on my way to grab some food - are you hungry, wanna come along?"

He accepted, and our conversation only got more and more interesting...

People come to Thailand for all kinds of reasons.

Some are looking for the pristine paradise they saw in DiCaprio's movie "The Beach"...

Some want to experience "One Night in Bangkok" and see some of the world's wildest night life...

Some are looking to go diving in the South, or riding elephants in the North...

...And others come here to meditate, as did my new friend.

I find Buddhism to be a fascinating religion.

A couple of years ago, I spent some months in Singapore, visiting temples, reading books about Mahamudra and spending hours in meditation myself.

And during that time, a monk told me a story I will never forget.

You see... in his order, the monks were not allowed to own any money - when they help someone, they do it out of the kindness of their hearts, but they never take payments.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

In fact, most have no possessions whatsoever, other than their robe and the bowl they eat from!

One day, however, he had given some spiritual counsel to a woman from town...

...And that lady was so grateful that she wanted to repay the favor in some way.

She begged him to accept some money from her... but as you can imagine, the monk refused.

Finally, she said - "Okay, I understand that you can't take any money. So please think of something you need from town... maybe a tooth brush, or a pair of new shoes. And I will buy it for you as a gift."

The monk finally accepted the generous offer, went back to his room and started thinking about what things he might find useful.

A tooth brush would come in handy indeed... and his shoes were very worn out.

After some time, he had compiled a list of items that would be useful to him - now it was only a matter of choosing the most important one to ask for.

But now he couldn't make up his mind!

Suddenly, all the items on the list seemed to be absolutely necessary... when he hadn't missed any of them before the woman from town had made her offer.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

He cursed himself for letting himself get caught up in attachment to material objects again, decided to let go and ended up telling the woman that he changed his mind - he didn't want anything from her.

Possessions would only create the desire for MORE...

...And this form of desire is one that many Buddhists strive to eradicate in themselves once and for all.

I don't know if I could ever go to the same extreme as this monk in Singapore...

I certainly don't want to live without a toothbrush!

But there's a part of this story that I can really identify with.

When I was a teenager, I went on an exchange program for a year... it was to be the first time I would live overseas, and I had to make a similar decision as the monk:

Out of all my possessions, what should I take with me?

Anything I'd leave behind, I wouldn't be able to get a hold of for an entire year.

After all, I was only allowed to bring a suit case and a small backpack on the plane with me.

But when the twelve months were up and I returned back to my home country, I realized something fascinating...

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

...During all that time, I didn't miss any of the things I had left behind... not even once!

Which brought me to a simple conclusion: Hey, if I can live without all this stuff for a year, then I can probably live without it forever.

And at that point, I decided to become a minimalist.

Today, all I own in this world is a backpack with some clothes and a laptop - that's IT.

In my opinion, all possessions are dead weight that tie me down and impinge on my freedom.

As it stands now, I can go anywhere in the world at moment's notice.

If I wanted to, I could have breakfast in Sydney tomorrow morning... or in Hawaii, in Sicily or even in Brazil.

And that, to me, is worth much more than all the things we are conditioned to pile up in our modern society.

To quote the movie Fight Club: "The things you used to own... now they own you. We work in jobs we hate so that we can buy s*** we don't need."

Truer words have never been spoken... and my friend, the hermit from the hotel, doesn't own a lot of stuff either.

Just like me, he owns some clothes and a computer to communicate with his folks back home... but that's it.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

And I'll say one thing for this guy... once I got to know him better, he seemed to be one of the happiest, and most balanced people I've ever met.

He is so in touch with his inner self, his emotions and his sensations that he can even sense what the weather is like...

...Even when he's alone in his room, with the windows closed and the shutters down.

And that's only the beginning of what he told me...

...Maybe I will write a bit more about some of the things I learned from him in a future post.

If this article did inspire you to get rid of some things you'll likely never look at again in your life, here's some advice to get you started:

Next time you come across an item that you haven't used in a few months, throw it out.

Chances are you'll never use it again.

And next time you come across an object in your house hold and you're not sure, give yourself 30 seconds to think about it.

If after 30 seconds you're still undecided, throw that out too.

You can also give it away... in fact, this philosophy of mine has saved some of my friends a bunch of money! ;-)

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

...If you had to leave your home country for a year, what would you take with you, other than the bare necessities?

What's the one thing you cannot live without?

Until next time, always the best...

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 10

"We don't pay for massages."

What? I couldn't believe my ears... how could she refuse to pay? This was outrageous... and I can't deny it, I was really angry.

But there wasn't a whole lot I could do about it, other than just accept her answer... I hung up the phone, and decided to find a different solution.

Now, before you ask me what massages I'm talking about and why she didn't pay for them, let me give you some background... and a fair warning.

Today I will have to talk about one of the dark sides of long-term travel... one of the scariest things that can happen to you on the road.

It all began about a year ago in Manila, the capital of the Philippines.

I was treading the pavement of what seemed like the entire city, a mega-metropolis of 12 million people, looking for an apartment...

...When I suddenly felt a sharp, crippling pain in my legs.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

I played it off and thought it's probably nothing serious...

...My grand-father had always told me: "any ailment that shows up out of the blue also disappears back to where it had come from".

I didn't worry too much about it.

Unfortunately, he was wrong, this time... and after the pain persisted for about two weeks, I decided to see a doctor.

Sports injury. Of course... I live a pretty athletic life style, and I like to work out at least 5 or 6 times a week.

Apparently I had overdone it... and now I was in trouble.

And this is a question I get fairly frequently... what if you get sick in a foreign country?

Who is going to take care of you?

How are you even going to select the right doctor?

And what kind of insurance will cover you when you're 20,000 kilometers from home?

I used to think that I knew the answers to these questions...

I had an international health insurance plan that I had paid into for about a decade, and I felt confident that they would cover me if I ever needed them.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

They had a good reputation and were part of a major bank. In fact, my personal banker had recommended them, and I trust her implicitly.

The medical bills from my sports injury in Manila started to pile up...

I had to pay for MRI scans, X-Rays, doctor consultations, four sessions of physical therapy per week, acupuncture, all kinds of medication and even ultrasound and laser-therapy...

...All of which was indicated by the relevant doctors.

Yet it quickly became apparent that my insurance provider was going to leave me in the rain...

...After over ten years of paying my dues every year, I finally needed their help for the first time - my first serious injury abroad.

But when I sent my medical bills in for approval, they just replied: "We don't pay for massages."

I never had a single massage as part of my treatment... but that was their excuse so they wouldn't have to cover the physical therapy sessions.

And not only that... they kicked me out of their insurance plan and said they would never insure me again.

I was so frustrated and angry, and I really felt cheated.

What a scam! Health insurance my eye... they collect for a decade, and then kick me out when I finally need them?

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

There was a part of me that wanted to get a lawyer and pursue this matter in court.

But that would only imply an even greater investment of time, money, energy and frustration... and I believe life's too short for war.

I suppose that's the insurance industry... it's just another for-profit corporation, looking for ways to minimize costs if they can get away with it.

There isn't that much us "little guys" can do - we're pretty much at the mercy of these huge, powerful organizations.

Though a friend of mine actually had some good advice for me, and while it came a bit too late in my situation, it might help you out in the future, so I'll share it...

...This is what he told me:

"Look, here's the secret - if she won't help you, ask to talk to her boss. If HE won't help you, ask to speak to HIS boss.

Eventually, at some point, you'll reach someone who thinks it isn't worth his time to have to deal with your headache who'll just give you what you want.

For someone higher up, it just isn't worth the hassle."

Or as they say in England: the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

It's just a question of whether or not it's worth the hassle for YOU or not, to cause that drama to get what you want.

But as always, there is a silver lining... one of the great things about traveling for a long time is that you start to build a massive network of personal connections around the globe...

...And thanks to my network, I'm in touch with fellow perpetual travelers.

I ended up meeting two of them in Manila for dinner a week later, and they had some recommendations for me...

...International health insurance providers that cover people from just about any country in the world.

I'm actually still in the process of comparing these providers to each other, but two of the most reputable international health insurances for travelers are apparently Seven Corners and World Nomads.

I will keep you posted as I find out more about them. I've grown a bit mistrustful of insurance providers in general, to be frank (if you pardon the pun)...

...But I suppose it's probably a good idea to get at least the basics covered.

Alternatives are staying in countries where

- (1) public health care is free, or
- (2) private health care is very cheap.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

That's probably a topic for another post, but if you're at all interested in such things, you might look into the book "Patients Beyond Borders".

It's the leading guide book on so-called "medical tourism"... something you might want to research on Google if it sounds like it could be useful to you.

Here in Thailand, for example, private clinics are world-class and dirt-cheap.

So, this was a bit of a rant... I apologize about that.

But some readers asked me about international health insurance, and my first-hand experiences haven't been the best, despite choosing a reputable agency.

So be very careful with your selection, read all the fine print and consider paying out of pocket wherever you can.

Not ideal, but in some cases it might just be the better option.

Have you made frustrating experiences with insurance providers before?

Or have you found a really good one?

Thanks for reading, and I'll be back with a more optimistic article shortly...

I promise.

There are hassles to be faced, no matter where you go - but I still maintain that life on the road is 99% positive.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

And soon I'll write more about some of the (good) life-changing Kodak-moments you can experience while traveling the world.

We'll talk soon...

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 11

Hey guys... Today I have another question for you. What would you do if you had ten million dollars?

Think about it for a second...

...If you didn't have to work for a living, if you didn't have to worry about bills or the future, and if you could take care of all your loved ones without having to stress about a career?

Did you say "travel the world"?

I'm always amazed how many people give me that answer when I ask them about their ideal life-style...

...It seems to be the main reason why people buy lottery tickets!

Yet there is something that is still holding them back from taking the plunge...

...Maybe they think they can't afford it, maybe they're worried about the future, or maybe they're simply afraid of the unknown.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

If that's you, if you really want to go but there's something standing in your way, then today's article is for you...

...And I'll give you some practical step-by-step advice on setting up a life in a foreign country.

You see, about a year ago I stayed in Bahia for a couple of weeks, and one of my best friends came to visit me from Arizona.

And as it turns out, most Americans have the same limitations set up in their minds about traveling...

...Whenever he told someone that he was flying to Brazil, people would reply with something along the lines of: "Wow Matt, you are so lucky."

His response was always the same: "You know what... I'm really not. I worked hard, saved up and bought a plane ticket."

And that's his attitude...

...While the same friends who told him that they couldn't go to Brazil had just bought a new TV for the sake of passively experiencing the adventures of fictitious characters...

...Matt had decided to spend the money on something that would last him a life time instead...

...On an experience that he help him to evolve as a person and that he will remember forever.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

But if you've never left your entire life behind, at least for a while, it can be a scary undertaking... how does it all work?

Where can you sleep and eat and not spend all your savings on hotels and expensive restaurants?

How do you make money?

Where are you going to meet people so you won't get lonely?

In order to answer these questions, I'd first like to expand a little bit on what we really need in life in order to be happy.

There are really two areas of life that we need to master: success, and fulfillment.

Success means having our life on lockdown, and all our needs met...

...But that wouldn't do us any good if we didn't also experience a sense of fulfillment!

Maybe you have heard the saying that some people are so poor, all they have is money...

And while fulfillment is a true art form and very difficult to quantify, success is really very measurable and scientific...

...In fact, there are only three things you need to master in life in order to feel like you have achieved success and like you're in charge of your own destiny and in control of your life...

...And these three things are Health, Wealth and Relationships.

Whenever somebody asks me about setting up life in a new country, I always recommend tackling these three areas systematically, one by one.

Step 1: Find a place to stay

Find cheap transportation from the airport to a central area and shop around for a nice place that's not too expensive.

Good places to start for short term stays are the websites www.hostelworld.com, www.airbnb.com and even www.couchsurfing.org for FREE accommodation (and instant local friends!).

Once you've settled in, you can then look for a furnished apartment to rent by the month...

...That is usually going to be cheaper than hotel rooms.

Look for something either in a central location or near public transport, and you may want to test the internet connection before you sign anything, too.

Step 2: Health

Figure out where you're going to get healthy meals from.

Look for restaurants that offer more than just junk food, or even a super market where you can do your own shopping.

You might also want to join a gym...

...Trust me, it can be very tempting to live on fast food and soft drinks when you're on the road, because it's a lot more convenient when you don't have a routine...

...But you won't enjoy your trip half as much if you constantly feel sluggish because your body is trying to digest a lot of processed foods!

Step 3: Relationships

Next, start meeting people! I don't know about you, but for me, this is the most important reason why I travel in the first place: the friendships I end up making in all the countries I visit.

If you spend some time couch surfing or even at a hostel, you'll find that making new friends is actually a pretty automatic process...

...And once you know just five people, they will introduce you to five more people each, who will in turn invite you to some party where you end up meeting another twenty...

...And soon, there is no stopping it and you won't ever be alone unless you choose to be.

Step 4: Wealth

This is the trickiest and scariest aspect of moving abroad for many people... how can you afford it?

I've written an article about working abroad before, and one about working online, so hopefully they will give you some ideas.

If you really need to generate some income fast, you can always talk to job agencies or language schools...

...But in the long run you're better off working with potential employers and clients directly, as any middleman is going to take a cut of your pay!

So there you have it...

...Just save up for a plane ticket and maybe enough funds to keep you afloat for the first three months...

...And one two three four, you have yourself a new life in a faraway paradise.

Hey - I'm not promising that this is going to be easy!

But it is certainly simple... like most things in life.

And the challenges you face will be to your character what carbon is to steel...

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

...Once you've done this a few times, your confidence in your abilities to surmount any challenge will grow, and who knows...

...Maybe you'll end up like me and only go back home to visit your friends and relatives for a few weeks per year.

That's really how I got started... I had the intention of spending a year abroad...

...But after a while, I realized that I could also do two years.

And soon enough I decided that I'll one-up Jules Verne... In 80 Days Around the World?

Heck, let's do it... but let's travel 365 times longer! :-)

If this article has inspired you and you want to give it a shot, I'm always happy to help with any questions you might have.

My best to you all,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 12

Hey guys!

One of the requests I've been getting was for more pictures of my travels...

...And today, I'll do you one better than that and show you some videos of different places I've been to in the last couple of months.

In fact, I shot a little video in Hong Kong last week before coming back to Manila...

...And the feeling of freedom, of just hopping from one country to another, is simply indescribable.

When I was still a teenager and always stayed in the same place, I already anticipated that feeling of freedom...

...And there were a couple of movies that gave me inspiration in the early days.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

Movies such as "Chocolat", in which Vianne roams from country to country, setting up her chocolaterie in each place for a couple of months before moving on...

...And in which the gypsy Roux moves from town to town on his own river boat.

Another more recent movie that really captures that feeling of freedom is "Up In The Air" with George Clooney...

...You see, for some reason I have always loved airports.

Being in a place and knowing that I could just go up to any counter and choose any destination and then wake up in any city of my choice the very next morning is simply amazing.

Or to quote the protagonist from the movie:

"All the things you probably hate about travelling - the recycled air, the artificial lighting, the digital juice dispensers, the cheap sushi - are warm reminders that I'm home."

And then there is the movie Titanic... in which Jack travels across an Ocean among the riches people in the world, even though he doesn't have a lot of money himself...

...My favorite quote from that one is probably:

"I got everything I need right here with me. I got air in my lungs, a few blank sheets of paper."

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

I mean, I love waking up in the morning not knowing what's gonna happen or, who I'm gonna meet, where I'm gonna wind up.

Just the other night I was sleeping under a bridge and now here I am on the grandest ship in the world having champagne with you fine people.

I figure life's a gift and I don't intend on wasting it. You don't know what hand you're gonna get dealt next.

You learn to take life as it comes at you... to make each day count."

I have made the same experience as Jack many times...

...As I mentioned before, I don't come from a wealthy family and I have to find ways to work my way around the world and look out for myself...

...But from time to time, you get into these kinds of situations when you meet new people every day...

...And I have had dinner with the Sheiks of Arabia, with billionaires and even with Royalty.

Maybe I'll tell you a bit more about that in my next article, and about some of the lessons I've learned from that.

But first, I'd like to give you a peak into this life, and what it's REALLY like...

...I mean, Hollywood movies are nice, but they're still fiction - what's it really like to be on the road?

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

You see, since I started contributing to the blog and the forum a couple of months ago, I have been to seven different countries...

...(to be precise, I've visited the cities of Manila, Saigon, MuiNe, Phan Thiet, Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, Jomtien, Chiang Mai, Udon Thani, Vientiane, Kuala Lumpur, Cainta, Clark, Mandaluyong, Makati and Hong Kong)...

...However, I travel without a photo camera!

I know that sounds crazy...

...But the darn thing got stolen in Sumatra a couple of years ago, and just like I discussed in the article about minimalist living, I realized that I didn't really miss it.

What's more, I also noticed that I rarely look at pictures of past travels... mostly because I'm always traveling RIGHT NOW.

What I do have, however, is a little VIDEO camera... and so I started shooting some videos for you guys and posting them on my "Diário de Bordo" on the Forum...

...If you'd like to follow my travels a bit or just have a conversation about roaming the planet, that's the best place to get in touch.

The first video I shot on a beach in Vietnam... And it was originally meant for some of my close friends only.

I never had any intention of publishing it, so this is the first take and completely uncut...

Around the World in 80 Years

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But my friend Pete told me that I should publish it.

He said if people can see the kind of life-style you can have if you speak languages, it might really motivate them and help them to study more...

...And so I decided to go ahead and let you in on my life a little bit.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=lkt-qABXf-U

Vietnam is a true paradise and very, very cheap...

...You just can't beat 10\$ a night for a room in a resort, with air con, very fast wireless internet, flat screen TV, queen size bed and a private bathroom... RIGHT at the beach!

South East Asia is really an amazing place...

And then the second video I'd like to show you today is one that I shot only last week, check it out:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=JpNpakU-ISI

I'm totally in love with Hong Kong, so if you're there in 2013, drop me a line...

I'm sure you'll find me there at some point.

What a vibrant city... the energy of the place is simply amazing, and I've found people to be incredibly friendly there.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

I'm running out of space here again, but there is lots more to come...

...In two weeks, I will fly to the United States and spend some time in Phoenix, Scottsdale, San Francisco, Oakland, Orange County, Oceanside and Los Angeles before heading back to Asia in early December...

...So I'll be writing about those trips, and I'll be uploading further videos as well.

I'll also be meeting Adir over there, so maybe the two of us can make a video together at the Golden Gate Bridge or something.

...And in the next article, I'll tell you about some of the most interesting people I've met on the road... so stay tuned for that!

Until then, my best to you all...

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 13

"If the wind doesn't change, I will sail tomorrow."

He held one finger up in the air and assessed the wind's speed and direction...

...He had been sailing around the world for five years non-stop, and I was about to join him on his trip.

And that... was going to be one of the most amazing parts of my journey.

You may remember that in the last article, I promised to tell you more about some of the most interesting people I have met on the road...

...And today I'll make good on that promise.

You see... when you keep going from place to place, meeting new people *every day* is almost *inevitable*.

And if you keep doing that in exotic locales and cultures, well...

...Some of these people are bound to be flamboyant characters with absolutely fascinating lives.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

These encounters have taught me a lot...

...And while there have been too many to count over the years, I'm going to tell you about some of them today.

But first, I will let you in on a little secret about me... I'm not only a linguist and a language teacher, I'm also a professional pianist and a music teacher.

And so it happened one day, as I was in Spain, that I got a phone call from an Asian pianist who is a very good friend of mine:

"Frank... I know this is coming totally out of left field... But how would you like to teach the piano in Bali?"

I was in Barcelona when I received that call... I had been in Spain for about half a year, I had just gotten out of a relationship and I was ready for a change of scenery...

Asia sounded *perfect*!

But more than Asia... Bali? One of the most famous islands for paradise beaches and tropical getaway vacations in the world...

I couldn't believe it when he told me.

What would you do? If someone offered you a job in Bali... would you take it?

Well, for me, that decision was a no-brainer...

...And I instantly said yes.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

I didn't even ask him anything...

...I didn't ask where I was going to live, how much money I was going to make or when the project was going to start...

I just said: "Absolutely man. Count me in!"

He was a good friend I could rely on... and I knew I was not going to regret that decision.

You see, Indonesia is one of those places that are so exotic that they might as well be on a different planet.

I mentioned Sumatra in my last article...one of the world's best spots for diving.

Then there is Java, the main island of the Indonesian Archipelago, with huge ancient temples that most people don't even know about...

...And then there is Bali, of course, the Hindu part of the country and one of the world's most famous places to go surfing!

But two of the most interesting things about Indonesia that most people don't even know about the country are these:

It is the world's biggest Muslim nation, and it still has royal families...

...And one of the princesses ended up coming out to dinner with me and a couple of friends of mine one evening.

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It still blows my mind to this day... royalty in the 21st century!

I remember wondering that night who was more influential in the country... the princess to my left, or the multimillionaire business tycoon to my right?

And this encounter taught me an important lesson, because as I was living among some of the richest people in the world, I realized something interesting...

In the end of the day, they were both just normal, everyday people like you and me...

...People who eat rice and meat, who fall asleep every night and wake up tired before their first coffee in the morning.

People who have their dreams and hopes and fears and aspirations in life, just like everybody else.

And that's the thing - when you do get to experience the life of the mega-rich for a while, you really begin to understand a fascinating part of human nature: we are truly adaptive creatures.

Studies have shown that people who have an accident and end up in a wheelchair might fall into a depression...

...But six months later, they are back to the same level of happiness they had before their misfortune.

By the same token, people who win the lottery are usually ecstatic for the first couple of months...

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...But once the initial novelty wears off, they, too, go back to their "baseline" of happiness.

That seems to be very difficult to believe... But trust me, it is very true.

I never asked my friend who invited me to Indonesia where I was going to live...

...but he had a real treat in store for me - I ended up living in the huge mansion of the millionaire I mentioned above.

There was the main house we lived in and two separate houses with additional rooms...

...Plus a fourth house where his seven servants lived, his driver, his gardener, his maids and all the other staff.

And you know what... for the first couple of weeks, I was totally blown away.

I had never experienced this kind of luxury in my life... And it was amazing.

But soon enough, the exact same "happiness effect" I described earlier started to get a hold of me... and I got back into a routine.

I went to work every day, did my workouts, had my meals and met my friends...

...And before I knew it, I didn't even really notice the luxury all around me anymore.

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And here is what I found... money is nice to have, and life is extremely complicated when you don't have enough.

But my time in Bali wasn't special because of the nice house I lived in, or because of my host's lavish life style...

...What made it special were the people I met there, and the friendships I forged.

What made it special was being in an exotic paradise that I could never even have dreamed of visiting just a couple of months earlier...

...And the moments I shared with my friends in that place.

And now I just realized that I'm completely out of space again, and I haven't even told you the story about the sailor who invited me to join him on his trip around the world for a while...

...So I guess I'll have to leave that for the next Part of "Around the World in 80 Years".

Thanks for reading...

My best to you all,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 14

Hey guys...

...Last time, I told you about a friend of mine who has been sailing around the world on his own little schooner for many, many years already...

...And I mentioned that I had a chance to join him on his voyage for a while and that we traveled a leg of the trip together.

And that is really one of the amazing things that start happening once you just get out there and start interacting with the world and meeting people...

...You just never know what kinds of situations you'll end up getting into.

I actually met this guy in Porto Seguro, one of the places that claim to be the spot where the Portuguese first set foot on the South American main land in the year 1500...

...And we got into a conversation as we were both riding the "busão" from our hotel to the beach.

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Fórmula Fluente

He was sitting next to me, reading a book in a language I had never seen before...

...And since I speak eight languages myself and the topic absolutely fascinates me, I asked him about it.

As it turned out, the book was in Norwegian, and he had basically retired and started to travel the world at the age of 28.

How is that possible?

Well, he wasn't rich, of course... Only very few people manage to amass millions in their twenties.

But, he had gotten himself a good education (the KEY to anything you want in life!), and worked as a lawyer long enough to buy a small, used sailboat.

These things can actually be cheaper than second-hand cars, and now he didn't have to pay rent anymore because he was sleeping on the boat...

...And so his cost of living was almost zero, and he was free to travel.

We went to one of the famous parties of Porto Seguro that night...

...And if you've ever been there, you know that it's one of the most amazing places to celebrate...

...Live music and caipirosca at the beach under a Bahian star sky...

...What could be better?

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But while we were still having drinks and talking to some people we had met that night, he suddenly started to look out onto the sea with a contemplative look and then declared:

"If the wind doesn't change by morning, I will sail tomorrow."

Can you guess what my response was?

That's right... the first thing I said to him was: "That sounds great man... do you need any crew?"

And so we set sail together the very next morning and headed South towards Vitória, the capital of Espírito Santo...

...And it was one of the most amazing parts of my 11½ years on the road.

One of the things my new friend Andrew would do was to tie a rope to his ankle and jump overboard in the middle of the ocean to go for a swim.

I thought that was one of the craziest things I had ever seen...

...We were nowhere near land, and the sea must have been thousands of feet deep below him...

...And only God knows what kinds of sea creatures he was sharing the waters with.

And then one day, it happened... I was lying on deck, looking at the sky and sunbathing, when I heard a loud coughing sound outside the boat.

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Oh my God... was Andrew drowning out there in the ocean?

I was really worried about him and immediately stood up to see if I could help him...

...But what's more, I had no idea how to bring the ship back to land without him!

And so I stood up and looked over the railing, and what I saw surprised me even more than anything I could have expected...

...There was a giant hunchback whale who had come up for some fresh air RIGHT next to the boat.

The sound I had heard was his blowhole, and he had been attracted by the sound of the engines of the boat...

...And the whale was close enough to me to where I could have touched it.

I called Andrew immediately, and for the rest of the day, we saw entire whale families as they were following us on our journey and jumping out of the water to get a better look at us.

As opposed to dolphins, however, whales don't just skip a foot above the water...

...They jump several meters high, and in fact Andrew warned me that this could be very dangerous.

When a whale jumps, he can't really see what's happening above the water, and so there is a risk of him landing on (and sinking) the ship!

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Fortunately, none of that happened and we arrived safely in Vitória a couple of days later.

I was still only in my second year of traveling the world at the time, but I remember thinking that day... wow.

This is what life is all about.

This is what I want my entire life to be like... to go from one paradise to another, make new friends everywhere, and experience life to the fullest.

But the real takeaway from today's article is this:

You just never know whom you are going to meet when you're on the road, or what kind of amazing adventures you can get yourself into if you stay open and strike up conversations with other travelers...

...So if you ever get a chance to go abroad, put your extrovert cap on and you will make more friends in a month than you would at home in a year.

That wraps it up for today...

My best to you all,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 15

Hey guys...

After a long hiatus, I am finally back to this travel series!

The past couple of months have been some of the busiest of my entire life...

...I started teaching a new course that required my full attention for about 15 hours a day, all while moving back and forth between six different countries...

...So my apologies for being out of touch!

I'm still on the road though, and I haven't forgotten about you guys.

Last night I had a conversation with a fellow traveler out here in Asia...

...And one thing that struck me about our talk was the word "real world".

He was often talking about going back to his home town London, which he referred to as more real than Asia.

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Fórmula Fluente

And I thought it's interesting how we often feel like the place where we happen to be born, by pure random chance, is somehow more "real" than other places.

But what's more, he was actually worried about going back home...

...He has been on the road for almost five years, and he was concerned about being forced to go back in case his income dries up.

He likes Asia better than England, and he likes traveling better than being "stuck" in one place... so that's a real concern of his.

Which brings up a question I get asked frequently...

...What can you do when you run out of money while you're "out there"?

This has happened to me more than once, especially early on during my travels...

...And I've long since figured out how to deal with it.

You see...one thing I've always believed is that success leaves clues.

If you want to be successful at something - languages, travel, a sport, a career or anything else at all - the best way to get there is to get instructions from someone who has already pulled it off...

...Someone who has already been successful.

And back when I was a kid, I made it a habit to approach people who had traveled a lot...

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...And I asked them about their life style.

I asked them to tell me stories of their adventures, but also about challenges they faced and how they overcame them.

And one of the stories I heard back in the day had such a profound impact on me that I will never forget it...

...Even though it has been so many years since I first heard it.

I was working at a factory at the time, saving up for my first big trip, and one of my fellow workers had spent many years traveling through all kinds of countries.

And here's what he told me: "Just take risks and don't pass up on the things you really want to do... because life will always go on."

I asked him what he meant, and he elaborated in the form of a story...

...And told me about one of the greatest challenges he ever faced on the road.

He was in Norway at the time...

...It was winter, and he had run out of money. All he had left were 3 Euros...

...Not enough for a meal, and definitely not enough to rent a room.

But what's more...

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...It was so cold that he wasn't able to keep his hands out of his pockets to even carry his bag... The cold was too painful.

So he was walking along the streets of Oslo, tense, cold, broke and hungry, kicking his bag in front of him as it started to get dark and the shops around him began to close for the night.

And this is where he learnt that life will always go on... no matter what.

He went into a flower shop to warm himself up for a couple of minutes, and got into a conversation with the lady who ran the shop.

She invited him to join her for dinner, and as it turned out, she needed some help.

The next day, he started working for her for a couple of weeks, saved up some money and continued his travels.

Life always goes on.

I have been in similar situations, and his story was always an inspiration for me.

And the fear of challenges like this one is one of the reasons why many people don't follow through on their dream of traveling the world.

But what can you do if you get stuck somewhere without any money?

The most obvious answer is to teach English.

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It's pretty amazing, really, but in almost every country in the world, you can find work as a language teacher...

...There are only very few exceptions, such as Singapore or the Philippines, where English is (one of) the official language(s).

And the second most obvious answer is working as a waiter.

Those two jobs are like magic buttons that you can push almost anywhere in the world and make at least enough money to survive until you can figure something else out.

But there is a third way to keep traveling once the money runs out...

...And I learned about it the same way I heard the story about that cold winter in Norway.

During one of my first months on the road, I ran into a guy who had been traveling the world for many years already...

...And so of course I asked him how he was able to fund this life style.

The answer: Work in tourism!

Most cities that attract tourists are seasonal...

...Which means there is a lot of work to be done during certain months of the year, but no work at all outside the season.

You can work as a ski instructor, diving teacher, or even as an animator in a beach hotel for 6-8 months per year and really save up...

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...And then you get several months off, so you can use that money to travel at your leisure for the rest of the year.

It's going to be a bit of a rough ride, especially if you want to work a lot of overtime to really save up...

...But you're working in paradise...

...And you get paid to be in a place that other people can only dream about visiting for a week or two per year.

Which brings me back to my friend who was worried about going back to the real world...

...Leaving South East Asia and heading back to the cold and the rain of London for mind-numbing work in an urban, materialistic society.

And this is what I told him...

...Go to Vietnam to teach English... or simply head back to Europe to work in tourism for a while.

One place is no more or less real than the other...

...And fortunately, we live in a free society where we can choose our place in this world.

It's really pretty amazing, actually.

I can't believe how long this article has gotten again, there are a couple more great tips I wanted to share here but I want to keep this below novel-length for today...

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

...So I'll have to leave the rest for the next edition of "Around the World in 80 Years."

Guys, it's good to be back.

Greetings from Asia and my best to you all,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 16

What if you could actually get PAID to travel the world?

And I'm not talking about having a job abroad...

...I mean, what if somebody actually gave you money every day to go from place to place...

...MORE than you could spend, so you'd actually be saving up in the process?

What if, on top of all that, you also had free food AND free accommodation everywhere you go?

Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it?

I will never forget the day I ran into Janine...

...It was an autumn day on the stunning Spanish island Gran Canaria, just off the coast of Africa, and we were having dinner with some other travelers.

Her story stood out from the others...

...Not only had she seen more countries than anybody else...

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...She had also done it for free... and made money in the process!

So what's this great opportunity? Become a cocaine smuggler? Money launderer? Maybe a professional hitman? Nope...

...The answer is both totally ethical and completely legal, and just about anyone can do it...

...In fact, it is not only one of the most promising ways to travel the world, but also one of the EASIEST ones.

"So what are you talking about Frank? Stop teasing already and tell me the secret!"

Well, I've actually already told you...

...It was buried in one of my previous articles, I just haven't talked about it at great length yet.

And the best way to understand what I mean is a quote by Zig Ziglar: "You will get all you want in life if you help enough other people get what they want".

I really believe in this quote.

In other words... one of the best ways to travel the world is by helping other people to travel the world.

Still too cryptic?

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I'm talking about the cruise ship industry, of course!

19 million people escape from their daily routine on an ocean liner every year...

...And if you help them make their dreams come true, your own dreams will come true as an automatic byproduct.

The surprising fact is... it's actually very easy to find a job on a cruise ship, because most people don't want to work on the high seas for a life time.

For most, this is seasonal work... they want to have an adventure for a couple of months, and then get back to the main land.

That means that turnover in staff is high... so cruise companies are constantly looking for personnel.

But how can you get a hold of one of these dream jobs?

There are two ways, really.

You could either get hired by the cruise line directly, or you could go through an agency...

...There are a ton of companies out there whose business is recruiting staff for the ocean liners.

If you're serious about this idea, I recommend you do both... I did.

I looked up all the cruise lines, AND all the cruise job agencies in online directory (Google is your friend, and so is Wikipedia).

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Next, I made a list of the biggest ones, because I didn't want to be stuck cruising back and forth between two islands... I wanted to travel wide and far!

And third, I eliminated all cruise lines that went to cold countries.

I know some people dream of a cruise to Alaska or the Antarctica, so that's just my personal preference.

There are stunning landscapes to be explored even in the Scandinavian fjords, whereas I have acquired more of a taste for the tropics... But that's all up to you.

Next, pick a profession!

What would you like to do on board of the ship? Do you want to be an entertainer, a magician, a dancer, or a singer? Do you want to be a cruise director, tour guide, casino croupier or librarian?

All of those jobs are great options... they all pay pretty well and leave you plenty of free time to explore every harbor your ship anchors for the night.

Jobs like chamber maid, waiter, cook and engineer are a different matter, however... they tend to be extremely tough, with 13 hours of work per day, for 30 days a month.

The next thing to consider is what flag you'd like to sail under.

The good news is that all ships sail, by definition, out on the open seas, and that means you won't need any special work visa...

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Neptune is a lot more forgiving than the American TSA!

It also means that in many cases, your income will be tax-free... check with your attorney for details.

Finally, rumor has it that American cruise lines often offer better hours and higher compensations than Brazilian ones... so that's something to keep in mind as well.

The two largest cruise lines in the world are Princess Cruises and Royal Caribbean (I worked for the former for a while)...

...Those two companies always one-up each other, as each year one of them will build "the biggest cruise ship in the world", just to watch the other one build an even bigger one the year after.

Don't expect to get hired over night... and don't just apply to one cruise line.

In my case, I wanted to work as a pianist on board, so I recorded a demo and sent it to about fifty different agencies and companies.

Within a few weeks, I received the first couple of offers, and within a couple of months, I received the first offer I could not refuse.

I ended up taking a plane to San Francisco, where I was to board the Sun Princess as atrium pianist and see ALL the great islands of the Pacific Ocean.

The ship took me to Hawaii, Bora Bora, Tahiti, French Polynesia, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, New Zealand, Australia and many other (expensive, may I add) tropical paradise islands... for free!

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Where would you have gone?

I sometimes say how traveling is not all beauty and grace, and there are hard times, for sure...

There are visa hassles and insurance providers that don't pay up, and just in general life on the road isn't ALWAYS a dream.

Well, when it comes to life on a cruise ship, it really seems like nothing but a dream come true.

Make it happen!

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 17

It was 5 am on a Tuesday morning...

The streets were dark, and all the lights were out.

There was nobody to be seen anywhere...

...No cars or people, only dark, ramshackle houses that from the looks of it may have been abandoned.

The only person in sight was the tall, overweight Nicaraguan man standing next to me... Yelling at me in Spanish:

"Dame tu dinero! Dámelo todo o te mato! Tu sabes que es matar? Te mato... Dámelo!"

Unlike the day I ran into the meditator in my hotel in Chiang Mai, this was not just a misunderstanding...

...He had a knife at my throat, and from the crazed look in his eyes I wasn't sure if he was an insane person, on drugs or simply incredibly violent by nature.

Apparently, my mum had been right...

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

Traveling could be dangerous, at times.

Of course I always take all the usual precautions...

...Avoiding dark areas in big cities, wearing simple clothes in dangerous countries, and never flashing money or any other valuables in public.

But in twelve years of non-stop traffic in all corners of the globe, the law of averages can eventually catch up to one.

But let's back up a bit...

...I had actually just spent a very pleasant week with my friend Graham in León, the capital of Nicaragua.

Graham is a professional photographer from Seattle and a good friend of mine...

...He traveled from Alaska to Patagonia with his camera, taking breathtaking pictures of the landscapes and people he encountered on the way.

After a week, I continued my trip to Managua, the capital of the country...

While he stayed behind, waiting for a camera lens to arrive in the mail.

Unfortunately, Managua made a less friendly impression on me than León...

And in fact, locals told us we should never walk the streets after dark.

Downtown, it wasn't advisable to wander around at all... Not even during the day, and not even in groups.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

Apparently, gangs comb the streets in large groups...

They carry machine guns and if you should be unfortunate enough to run into them, they won't just take your money...

They will take your clothes as well, leaving you to head back to your hotel naked.

Now, I consider myself relatively adventurous, but that's just not my kind of place...

...So I got up at 4.30 am the next morning to be at the bus station before 5 and to buy a ticket for the 6 am bus to San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica.

But no such luck... not only were the tickets sold out, there was also a long wait list.

So I decide to take a cab to another bus terminal that would take me only to the boarder, and travel onward from there myself.

And of course I decide to take a taxi, just to be safe... I don't want to risk getting held up, right?

As I leave the bus station, I see a totally battered and messed up taxi and think to myself... no way, I'm not getting in THAT cab.

I walk up to a nice, new taxi instead and chat up the guy standing next to it.

We agree on a price, and he grabs my bag and throws it into the trunk... of the battered taxi.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

For a second I thought about protesting, but there were no other drivers around, and I heard him calling out to the people selling food in front of the bus station.

"Hey guys I'll be back in a bit", he said.

So I figured if he's part of the people working there every day, he should be fine to go with, and I hopped into the cab.

In all my years on the road, this must have been the worst car I've ever driven in.

In fact it looked as if it had been on fire at one point.

It was squeaking and screeching, and I just kept thinking... any moment now, this thing is going to fall apart.

And that's when it hit me... I suddenly had a very, very bad feeling about this situation.

It was a very strong premonition... it was more than just the THOUGHT that something was wrong... I KNEW.

But the driver distracted me from my thoughts as he started to make small talk with me.

He asked me where I was from, and what I was doing in Nicaragua?

Something was off though... there was something NQR (Not Quite Right) about him, as the saying goes.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

And as I'm still thinking that thought, he pulls into a dead end street and gets out of the car...

I got somewhat nervous at this point, but as it turned out, he had just left the car to work on one of the wheels with some wire.

Nevertheless, I decided to get out of this situation.

I just didn't trust him.

I tried to open the door, but I found that it was locked from the outside...

...And it could not be opened from the inside of the car.

Now, when I was 18, I had a car just like that, so I was quick enough on my feet to roll down the window to open the door from the outside.

But it was still dark, and there were no people anywhere... and definitely no other taxis.

The driver noticed me opening the door and said: "Wait, just 5 minutes... please".

He sounded like he really didn't want to lose me as a customer, and so I figured, hey - don't be paranoid.

People are very poor in this country, maybe I should really support this fella if he can't even afford a better car.

As I was still thinking these thoughts and with no other taxis in the vicinity, the driver returned to the car and we were back on the road.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

The car wasn't rattling as badly as before anymore... and it seemed like everything was cool.

I breathed a sigh of relief, as we continued on our way to the bus station.

Not a minute later, he asked me where I was from a second time.

That was the first time I started to think he must be some sort of crazy person...

...And next thing I know, he pulls over in a dark empty side street again and gets out of this car.

Only this time, it wasn't to fix the car.

My window was still open, and so he positioned himself next to me, blocking the car door with his body so it couldn't be opened, and put a knife to my throat...

And one thing I really need to learn to do better...

...Is to keep my articles a bit shorter.

This is about to turn into a book!

So I'm going to have to leave the rest of the story for next time.

I apologize for the cliff hanger, but I'll write the conclusion of this story in just a couple of days, along with some tips on how to stay safe on the road.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

He did NOT get my money... so stay tuned for the next article, and I'll tell you how I pulled that off.

Until very soon,
Your friend -

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 18

Hey guys!

I left you on a real cliff hanger with my last article, stuck in a battered taxi with a knife at my throat... somewhere in a dark alley in Nicaragua.

Let me close that open loop for you today.

After the taxi driver threatened to kill me and asked me for all my money, I was certain of only one thing...

...I was not about to put his resolve to the test!

At the same time, as a seasoned traveling veteran, I still had a couple of tricks up my sleeve...

...And he was not about to get all my possessions off me quite so easily.

So if you ever find yourself in a dangerous city on the road, here are some things you can do to protect yourself:

1. Have a decoy wallet on you.

Keep your real wallet hidden somewhere, and carry a second wallet in your pocket in case you get held up.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

That way, you can show that wallet to the thief and hand over its contents (or heck, the entire wallet), without losing an arm and a leg (metaphorically speaking, hopefully!)

2. Keep your most valuable stuff in a money belt...

...Things like your passport, your credit cards, and other important documents such as travel insurance papers.

If you're really savvy (or if you're traveling in a really dangerous area), you might even have two money belts...

With one of the two serving as a decoy (see item 1).

3. It's also wise to make copies of all of your documents before you take off, or even better, scan them and save them online somewhere.

That way, you can access them later to have them replaced quickly.

4. If you travel with a laptop or other electronics, you're probably more concerned about losing the data on those devices than you are with their material value.

I'm using a software called www.carbonite.com to keep an automatic backup of everything on my computer.

Even if I should ever get jacked and lose my laptop, I'll be able to restore all my files to a new computer instantly.

5. Distribute your valuables as much as possible.

Don't keep everything in the same pocket...

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

If you have two backpacks, a jacket and a pair of jeans, put some of your money in each of those places.

That way you might just lose part of your possessions.

6. Keep all important information handy in your email account, such as the phone number of your credit card hotline in case you need to have it blocked, as well as travel insurance hotlines and the number of your country's embassy.



Since I take all these precautions, I was most worried about one item in my backpack that I did not want to lose at almost any cost...

...One item that was worth more to me than my money, my credit cards, my passport and my electronics.

It was an item that would have been very difficult to replace: I was working my way from country to country as a musician at the time, and so I was carrying a large collection of music sheets with me.

After the taxi driver had picked up the contents of my decoy wallet and my decoy money belt, he told me to leave my bags in the car and run away.

But since my music sheets were my livelihood, that was more than I was willing to give up...

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

And I told him so, while maneuvering my bags between the two of us.

But then, something surprising happened... He agreed to let me keep my bags.

I'm not sure whether he was worried that I'd fight him over the backpack, or whether he thought that he'd already gotten the jackpot with my money belt.

In any case, that was the end of our encounter, and I made my way to the next main street as fast as my feet would carry me.

The first taxi driver I encountered asked me what in the world I was doing in this neighborhood...he said it was a dangerous area, and I shouldn't be there.

Haa... thanks for the heads up, mate!

I told him what had happened, and he said it was a miracle that I'm still alive.

As it turned out though, what happened to me was not an uncommon occurrence in Nicaragua.

At the border to Costa Rica, I ran into an expat who told me that there had been 400 similar incidences of Managua cab drivers holding up passengers in the past two weeks alone.

I have since learned to never travel in dangerous countries before the sun comes up...

...Not even by taxi.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

As I was sitting on the bus to San José, my next destination, I started to reconsider whether I really wanted to spend a lot more time in Central America.

Despite having gotten off lightly, I was still a bit shaken up.

Not the kind of adventure I'm usually looking for on my travels!

That said, I have found one common pattern with most of the problems I run into from time to time: in retrospect, it could have been avoided.

I could have listened to my gut and not gotten into that old taxi.

I could have waited until the sun came up to go to the bus station.

Or I could have booked a ticket ahead of time, to get on one of those buses to the border right away.

So be safe on the road, and if you ever come out this way to Asia (where I'm currently traveling), you will find that safety is one of the greatest perks out here...

...There is practically no violent crime in most of these countries.

It's truly something amazing.

My best to you all,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 19

"Brasileiro?"

"Opa!"

"Sabia... Pensei agora, esse cara deve ser brazuca também."

"É mesmo... Tá aqui de férias?"

"Não, intercâmbio... E você?"

There's nothing easier than making friends with people from our own country when we're traveling.

You have an instant bond with them. In fact, just hearing our language abroad usually gets our attention right away.

However, chances are at least **one** of the reasons for your trip was to practice your English, right? Or maybe your French, Japanese or even Swahili.

And that's just not going to happen by hanging out with other Brazilians!

In fact, there's a very common myth going around in our language community: "A year abroad will make you fluent."

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

Not so...

Not if you don't actually immerse yourself in country and culture, not if you don't actually spend the majority of your time with the locals!

One of the tragedies I see time and again is people going abroad for a few weeks or even for a whole year, only to come back without having attained that much-desired fluency.

And the reason is simple - you will miss your home sometimes, and the easiest way to "matar a saudade" is hanging out with other Brazilians.

"Okay, easier said than done, Frank", you might say... "It's not so easy to make friends with people from other countries. They often aren't as open as Brazilians, and they usually have friends already, so it can be hard to break into their circles!"

And that is certainly true.

As a rule of thumb, it's always easier to make friends with people from warmer countries...

...South Americans tend to be some of the most open people you'll meet on your travels, whereas people from colder climates can be a bit more reserved.

So, here are a couple of tips on meeting non-Brazilians...

...So that you can really experience the culture of the country you're visiting, and of course, practice your English (and your Swahili).

1. Travel alone, if you can

I know a lot of people are reluctant to try this one on for size, but the fact is - you won't stay alone for more than a couple of minutes unless you choose to.

The fact that you have nobody to talk to will practically *force* you to reach out to other people you meet (don't distract yourself with your iPhone now!)...

...And you will meet ten times more people than if you stick with your travel buddy.

Besides, you already know each other's stories anyway, right?

Time to hear (and experience!) some new stories.

2. Stay at hostels instead of hotels

You will be surprised how many other people you'll meet in a hostel dorm (or even in the common area, if you prefer to have your private room) that are in the same boat as you are...

...They're traveling alone, and they're eager to make new friends.

There's nothing easier than greeting the guy in the bunk bed next to yours with a casual question...

...Even a plain "Where are you from" will serve as an excellent ice breaker, because a hostel is an environment where just about everybody is looking to connect.

3. Approach people that are alone

People who are on their own are often more open to making new friends...that goes both ways.

Not only will you find yourself naturally behaving in a more extroverted way if you're on the road without your buddies...

...You'll also find that other people that don't have a companion are often eager to exchange experiences, swap travel tips, or just make a new friend.

4. Don't be shy to meet people online

This may have been a little bit scary a couple of years ago, but these days literally everybody is on the internet, and there's nothing easier than finding like-minded people on the web.

The best site to meet other travelers is probably couch surfing...

...You don't need to host anyone or stay at their place if you don't want to, the site also offers casual meetups for coffee and even group outings...check it out!

Meetup.com is a great place to have a look as well.

5. Finally, be proactive about meeting people everywhere

Ask people for directions when you're in a new place, but pick people that don't seem very busy... chances are you'll get into a conversation.

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

Join clubs and sports teams if you're staying in a place for a while, take up a new hobby and reach out to people in any way you can think of, and NEVER turn down an invitation to go do something interesting (Watch the movie "Yes Man" with Jim Carey for more on that mindset!)

And here's another hint...

...You really just need to meet one person in the country you're visiting.

They will then be able to introduce you to five more people, who can introduce you to five more people each, and before you know it, there's no stopping it!

The bottom line is this... making new friends on the road is a lot easier than it seems, and one of the most worthwhile things you can do on your trip.

In the end of the day, it's the friendships and the people you meet that will make for the best memories.

Remember - A stranger is just a friend you haven't met yet!

So long and my best to you all,

~ Frank Florida ~

Around the World in 80 Years - Part 20

"Just go. Don't plan anything."

I looked at him incredulously...

...I was just about to start backpacking through South America for an entire year - and here he was, telling me not to plan ANYTHING?

I was having coffee with Olaf, my old gym teacher... and since he had spent many years traveling the world (and South America in particular), I had met up with him to pick his brain, before embarking on my first big trip.

Of course I understood where he was coming from...

...Surely part of the adventure was to be spontaneous, to fly by the seat of your pants, rather than making checklists and spread sheets or following maps and guide books.

The problem was, I knew NOTHING about South America...

...I mean - I didn't even know where I'd be able to wash my clothes in Brazil.

After all, I couldn't well bring my washing machine with me... and that was one of the easier questions!

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

What about apartments? Jobs? Transportation? Vaccinations? Insurance? I had an entire laundry list of questions.

Despite my teacher's advice, I went online as soon as I got home and started researching.

I went on expat forums and read up on local customs.

I inquired with Google about renting apartments in Rio.

And I tried to figure out what the best bairro would be for a foreigner to live in for a while, and what kind of work I might be able to find.

Now, over a decade and dozens of countries later, I truly understand the wisdom in Olaf's words.

With 12 years of travel experience under my belt, the only thing I plan now before I go to a foreign country is this: I purchase a one-way plane ticket.

Everything else, I'll figure out when I put my boots on the ground.

After all, you can't really choose an apartment until you've actually seen it in person.

You don't ever really know what the best suburb is until you've visited it.

And you're probably also better off choosing a job once you've made yourself familiar with the environment and the city's layout and met your future boss.

At the same time, I remember how uncomfortable this advice made me when I first heard it, all those years ago...

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

...And especially for a first-timer, leaving their home country for a long time can be a scary prospect.

So how can you find that golden middle path between overplanning on the one hand and getting lost in a foreign environment on the other?

What Olaf told me, back in the day, was to pick up a copy of the "Lonely Planet"<<<[LINK](#)>>>.

Lonely Planet is a company that publishes guide books for solo travelers, but also for people who want to explore foreign lands in groups.

Their continent guides are called "...on a shoestring" (meaning, with a low budget), and so you can find great advice on the cheapest hotels, restaurants and means of transportation.

When I first struck out on this adventure, the Lonely Planet was actually still a bit of a "secret tip".

12 years ago, most people only knew the typical "tourist guide books"... but there is a big difference between a tourist and a traveler!

The tourist spends a week or two in a foreign country, books a package hotel in advance and takes a million pictures.

The traveler might explore a foreign land for months, learn its language, interact with the locals and really dive into its culture.

The Lonely Planet is a book for travelers...

...For people on a budget, for backpackers and for "shoe-stringers".

Around the World in 80 Years

Fórmula Fluente

Recently, its fiercest competitor, the "Footprint" <<<[LINK](#)>>>;, has actually become even better with more up-to-date information and better "secret tips" - not least because it's still less popular than the Lonely Planet, which has become somewhat of a main stream travel book by now.

So don't overplan things...

...Just grab a copy of the Footprint (or the Lonely Planet, if you prefer following the bigger crowds on the so-called "Gringo Trail") and read up on all the basics such as necessary vaccination and equipment...

...But then just buy a plane ticket and get going.

Everything else WILL sort itself out once you arrive at your destination.

Now the only question is, what's that destination going to be?

If you could choose any one of the 196 countries in the world today, which one would it be and why?

My best to you all,

~ Frank Florida ~