

The truth about taking a career break to travel

They say that travel broadens the mind, an adage which implies that the more we see of the world, the better. Yet once we get a foot on the career ladder, most of us put this idea to the back of our minds. ¹ But does taking a break to travel really have such a negative effect on your career?

Diving enthusiast Russ Brooks found that it did not. When he was 36, Russ took a career break of 11 months which took him to 16 different countries. ² 'The break showed that I was an independent thinker and willing to take risks to succeed,' he says. 'Nothing like a few stories of travelling in the developing world to show you can cope with anyone and any situation.' Contrary to what our society says, Russ was indeed employable.

Not only was Russ successful in his job hunt, but the break helped him to get his career back on the right track. 'My time away gave me time to unplug and recharge, see the world in an incredibly different light,' he says. 'It allowed me the time to step back and think about what was truly important to me. When I returned, I was inspired not to settle until I had found work that matched my core values.' ³

Far from having a negative impact on your career, taking a break to travel can actually increase your prospects when presented in the right way. Heather Baker, an HR professional in Chicago, advises on how to best explain the time away. 'Think about this from the employer's point of view. ⁴ Include it on your CV and share the details of when and why you did the break, as well as the result. If you are enthusiastic and positive about the experience, your passion will shine through and excite your potential employers as well.'

The main reason why travel improves a person's job prospects is that it can help them stand out in a crowd. ⁵ Mitchel Samuelson was surprised by his interview experiences after the six months he spent travelling. 'All the companies I interviewed with, the first topic we discussed was my career break and travelling, as it was either a common interest or they were envious and/or interested in where I'd gone.'

To sum up, then, it appears that the consequences of taking a career break to travel are nothing but positive. These breaks often provide people with better opportunities on their return, and on top of that, they can lead to more clarity and job satisfaction. ⁶ So, now that you know that travelling will not destroy your career, you can start planning your next career break. Bon voyage!



b Read the article again and match the missing sentences A–H to the gaps 1–6. There are two sentences you do not need to use.

- A On his return, it only took him three or four months to find employment.
- B As a side benefit, it allows you to see the world before you retire.
- C Long-term travel emphasizes a person's uniqueness and lets them be noticed – in a good way.
- D Most people cite fear of change, financial concerns, and lack of stability as excuses not to quit their job and head out to see the world.
- E In many cases they don't know what they want, so they stay.
- F After his sense of community was re-energized during his career break, Russ came back to become the CEO of a social impact media company.
- G We all fantasize about it: quitting our jobs, hopping on a plane, and heading out to see the world.
- H They want to know your career path and how this career break fits into that.

c Look at the highlighted words and phrases and try to work out their meaning. Check in your dictionary.

7 LISTENING

a **iChecker** Listen to Moira, who lives in the USA, describing a disastrous journey. How long did it take her to get home? Tick (✓) the right answer.

- 1 eight hours
- 2 twelve hours
- 3 fourteen hours
- 4 three days

b Listen again and answer the questions.

- 1 What was unusual about the weather that day?
- 2 How far is Moira's home from her office?
- 3 Who offered to give Moira a lift home?
- 4 Why had so many drivers parked at the side of the road?
- 5 What were some of the people walking along the road wearing?
- 6 What problems did they have between 5.30 and 6.45 a.m.?
- 7 Where did Moira tell the driver to drop her off?
- 8 Where did Moira walk to avoid falling over?
- 9 How did Moira get down the hill leading to her house?
- 10 What time was it when Moira eventually got home?

c Listen again with the audio script on p.75 and try to guess the meaning of any words that you don't know. Then check in your dictionary.