

# The Art Of Travel Summary

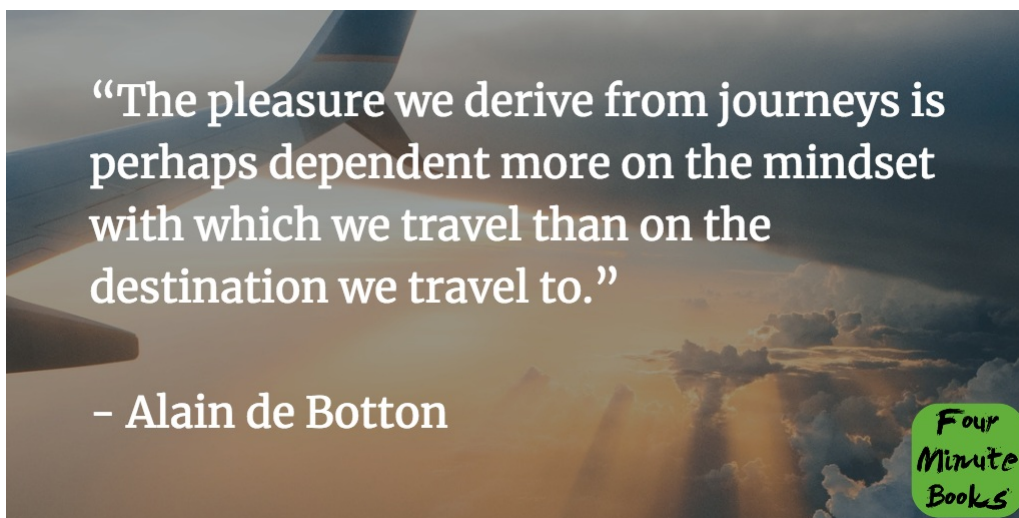


[fourminutebooks.com/the-art-of-travel-summary/](https://fourminutebooks.com/the-art-of-travel-summary/)

**1-Sentence-Summary:** *The Art Of Travel* is a modern, philosophic take on the joys of going away, exploring why we do so in the first place and how we can avoid falling into today's most common tourist traps.

**Read in:** 4 minutes

**Favorite quote from the author:**



Whenever I read about one of history's great philosophers, my first stop is [The School of Life](#). It's one of Youtube's oldest and most popular channels, with short explainer videos covering topics like relationships, art, culture, literature, history, and philosophy. But it's also an education company that teaches people around the globe in all areas where school lessons fell short.

The man behind this company is Alain De Botton, a Swiss-born British philosopher and writer. He's published over 20 books, most of which look at various aspects of modern life through the lens of philosophy. *The Art Of Travel*, for example, examines why nowadays, travel is both so desirable and yet often so disappointing. Instead of the latest tips and tricks, it prompts you to ask more fundamental questions when touring around the globe.

Here are my 3 favorite lessons:

1. Travel is a poor means of escaping, because you'll still be you.
2. Modern travelers must learn to explore again, because we already have the facts.
3. Spend more time documenting your travel experiences and you'll savor them longer.

Whether you've got a big trip planned or feel sort of worn out from constant flying around, I'm sure we can learn something from De Botton's philosophy of travel. Let's go!

## Lesson 1: Travel doesn't work as an escape, because your biggest problems come from inside.

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When I first started working for myself, I couldn't wait to live the laptop lifestyle. You know, cold drinks at the beach, while occasionally peering at my screen. But then something funny happened. I traveled around the world with a friend and eventually, it started feeling like a job. I realized travel isn't a cure to any of our really important problems. So, after coming back, instead of a digital nomad, I became a digital settler.

**Travel is a means, not an end. It's a poor form of escapism, because at the end of the day, you'll still be you.** What I learned on that trip was the same lesson the fictional character Jean des Esseintes discovered in the 1884 French novel À rebours. Esseintes is a French recluse, who spends all his time reading. But once he reads Charles Dickens, he feels a desire to go see London. He books a train ticket and packs his bags.

Excited about his trip, he buys a guidebook and goes to an English pub just before setting off. Once the time comes to board the train, however, he feels he's so worn out from all the 'Britishness' he's experienced that he never actually leaves home. We often dream up high expectations of far-away destinations, but especially if they're distractions from our own flaws, they can only disappoint.

## Lesson 2: Learning facts when traveling is a waste of time, we must find modern ways of exploring.

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Another modern-day travel issue is what I call fact fatigue. We go to new places, armed with long lists of sights, events, and experiences we want to dedicate time to. Then we quickly get tired from all the information we're presented with and eventually zone out, not using our time well at all. De Botton suggests that the time for travelers to collect facts may simply be over.

There's a wonderful book by a German author called Measuring The World. It's about Alexander von Humboldt's great voyage around the globe, in which he measured, tracked, and documented many natural phenomena for the first time in history. Humboldt was in constant amazement because he was constantly *busy*, something modern travelers aren't. His trip had a purpose.

Nowadays, travel is a luxury, we can afford to do it in our spare time. Also, most of the world's facts have been recorded and are available at the click of a button. That means **we must find new ways of exploring, of adding meaning to travel**. De Botton suggests asking more philosophical questions and I personally find travel to be the most fun when I don't look up anything and let myself be surprised by whatever I find.

## Lesson 3: Forget postcards and photographs, write letters and draw!

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I was never a big photographer, but when I got an iPhone in 2010, the game was on. Like most people, I started taking hundreds of photos, just because I could, only to never look at them again. These days I take about 20-30 per *month* and I feel a lot better. It allows me to experience things in the moment. If you've traveled pretty much anywhere in the past decade, you know this is a big problem.

Selfie sticks, drones, and over 100 million new pictures on Instagram every day. Imagine how many copies of the exact same scenes we create. At the same time, photos take us out of the moment. That's why De Botton suggests going back to something famed art critic of the 19th century John Ruskin practiced and preached: drawing.

If you draw a scene, you have much more time to process it, both with your senses and your mind. It creates a much more vivid memory and makes it easier to appreciate where you are. The same goes for sending long letters, as opposed to short postcards, or even just texts, as we so often like to do today. **The longer you take to process your travel experiences, the more fondly you'll remember them.** It's not about the resulting picture or reaction to the letter you get, but about the state of mind making them creates. As John Ruskin put it:

*"The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it."*

## My personal take-aways

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What I like about *The Art Of Travel* is that it connects an everyday experience to old perspectives from thinkers you'd never relate to otherwise. The figures from history De Botton selects aren't just the greats everyone knows, which makes for refreshing perspectives. A good read if you feel some of travel's contemporary pains catching up to you.

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## What else can you learn from the blinks?

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- What even Da Vinci would have envied us for
- Which part of the world 19th century Europeans were obsessed with
- How to prolong the soothing effects of nature
- The lessons we can learn about travel from the Bible
- Why you should actually go to an art museum

## Who would I recommend The Art Of Travel summary to?

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The 22 year old college student, who's biggest goal is to travel the world, the 52 year old manager, who's fed up with flying around the globe, and anyone who's seen their travel expectations disappointed before.