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Keep on moving

What actually drives our desire to travel? Jane Szita searches for the answers

If you were asked what inspired you to take the trip you're taking now, the chances are you wouldn't cite your DNA. Yet modern science suggests that travel is in our genes. When our distant ancestors migrated out of Africa, around 60,000 years ago, it seems that they had more than their fair share of the so-called "adventure gene" DRD4 – more, anyway, than their cousins who opted to stay at home.

Identified in the 1980s, DRD4 is a genetic marker that controls the intake of dopamine by the brain's reward centre, and is associated with all kinds of risk-taking and novelty-seeking behaviour. Geneticists believe DRD4 has influenced multiple migrations, explorations and innovations in human history – as well as

launching a thousand whitewater rafting trips and *Survivor*-style TV shows in more recent times.

But genetic explanations haven't stopped a host of philosophers, social scientists, psychologists and travel industry marketers from trying to uncover the less scientific reasons why we travel (or think we do). For example, in his book, *Tourist Behaviour*, Philip L. Pearce, a psychologist and Professor of Tourism at the James Cook University in Australia, surveys over 1,000 travellers from Western countries to discover their "tourist motivations".

The results suggest that the main reason for travelling is the quest for novelty, followed by the desire to escape everyday reality. The third motivation, ►►