



Luxury Travel

Transformative Trips Are the New Midlife Crisis Splurge

If all you're doing on your vacation is relaxing, you're doing it wrong.

By [Nikki Ekstein](#)

March 19, 2019, 12:31 AM EDT

A Broader Movement

Marchant's offering is the first formal product to promote travel-as-therapy, but others are on the same wavelength. Most notable is David Prior, who co-founded an eponymous travel membership club last fall on similar principles as Bring it Back.

“So many of our early clients came to us looking for a total reboot,” Prior says. “And our answer for that is to go way beyond the spa and the hiking vacation—to skip the five-day boot camp resorts and do something far more creative and meditative.” Learning a new skill in its place of origin, he says, is a particularly good strategy. “It’s the idea of using your hands to get out of your head.”



A spiritual quest in India with Prior. *Photographer: Gentl & Hyers*

For one client in a creative rut, that meant traveling from Tasmania to Seville to the English countryside, learning different ways to harvest fruit and produce jam—a favorite foodstuff—in each destination. For a mother looking to connect with her teen son, it was a series of pottery and indigo-dying classes with Japanese masters.

And sometimes, it's more of an internal journey that's required, Prior says. For a major tech founder who needed a sabbatical, it was showing him the world through a nonbusiness lens—and shutting down Barcelona's Sagrada Familia for the ultimate contemplative moment. And for a client who'd started to feel overwhelmingly jaded about the human condition in light of current-day politics, the formula was a spiritual escape in Varanasi and Rajasthan, in India. Each of Prior's trips is planned as a one-off—what he calls a personalized “travel prescription.”

“We want to send people where they’ll feel most like themselves, and identify what will be most freeing for them,” says Prior.



Travelers on a Prior trip in Mandu, one of India's ancient fort

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Marchant and Prior are ahead of a trend, albeit one in its infancy.

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“Most of our clients’ travels are motivated by endangered experiences—wildlife or cultural conservation—and increasingly by a desire to contribute philanthropically to the places they visit,” says Jimmy Carroll, co-founder of Pelorus, a British-based expedition travel company. His company has a life coach on its payroll who can build programs for guests looking to spiritually reset or energize for life’s next challenges, but Carroll says demand is still nascent for this type of offering.

“We only do a handful of trips like this a year,” he says, “predominantly for younger travelers, people in their early 30s who are constantly connected. Bringing a life coach into your travels instead of your regular everyday life allows you the time to think and reflect, and that makes all the difference in terms of enacting meaningful change.”

“This is something we’re going to see as a growing motivator in travel in the next two to five years,” predicts Marchant, inspired by the increased awareness of mental health and holistic wellness.

Prior agrees. Already he works on at least a half-dozen travel prescriptions each month. “There’s a big industry around what we’re doing that hasn’t been fully tapped yet,” he says. “It’s incontrovertibly a growing market; people are increasingly wanting to use their leisure time to enrich their lives in a certain way.”

The key, Marchant says, is thinking not just like a travel agent but like a psychologist.

“Oftentimes you don’t even have the bandwidth to work out what you really need—so we’re going to help do it for you. We have to match destinations and experiences to what people are going through in their lives,” says Marchant. And this time, a pampering beach resort just won’t cut it.