

How to be a Traveler

Curiosity is defined as “an eager desire to know or learn about something” via Webster dictionary. Do you consider yourself curious? Most people will say yes, but what if your feet were buried in the warm, soft sand watching the waves roll endlessly on a private beach? Almost impossible to remain curious in a scenario like that, right. I even enjoy drinking a virgin pina colada on a beach from time to time. But is it more rewarding to relax on a trip or remain curious? By using D.M. Mclean experiences and utilizing his curious spirit, I believe we can turn tourist into travelers

D.M. Mclean has a unique traveling portfolio. He was involved in the Peace Corps, where he was stationed in Thailand for about 2 years. In his experience teaching the natives, he was embedded into their culture and learned Thai. He worked hands on with these Thai children, teaching them the English language. In return, the children would be typical children. Telling him funny slang words in Thai trying to make fun, similar to children here! When D.M. was telling me this story you can see his eyes light up and his face turn into an infectious smile as if the memory was just from the other day. His journey in the Peace Corps was truly something special to him. Being able to listen to his experience is exceptional.

The Peace Corps was the polar opposite of a vacation but without a doubt a life-changing experience. What D.M.'s Peace Corps background blessed him with was the ability to connect with other cultures and befriend the people there. But this trip didn't serve as the catalyst for D.M.. When he was growing up he mentioned he would have his dad's

business clients stay with them in Jersey. Because of this exposure, during his childhood this could have sparked D.M.'s affinity for learning about different cultures and camaraderie. From D.M.'s curiosity and other traits he developed and strengthened over time he was able to use his ability to connect with others as a tool.

From talking to D.M. he has brought up the word tourist from time to time. My immediate impression of the word tourist gives a negative connotation. But, by his soft and raspy tone of voice, it seems to be that they are more negligent to embrace something new and different rather than sticking to a rudimentary planned vacation. By following a rigid schedule on a trip or vacation, are you enhancing the experience or limiting it? I believe it's a mix of both. By not being curious, you may hinder your trip whether you have a rigid schedule or not...

It was a rainy day in Boulder and D.M. and I were enjoying some Thai food. The Restaurant was owned by a Nepali man to my surprise, for a lack of better words it was unique. D.M. was telling a story from when he went back to Thailand with his children. After getting out of a taxi to visit a friend, D.M. and his children encountered an elephant. I was in awe of that experience. But, when D.M. was telling me this story about the elephant his face and tone of voice changed, it became more obsolete and sorrowful. Once he came to the conclusion to that story, D.M. stated "it was depressing to see the elephant in that city." When he said that it immediately clicked. From the time he was there during the Peace Corps from when he traveled there with his kids a lot has changed.

Reflecting on his time in Thailand with his kids. The confrontation with the elephant was difficult to digest and didn't sit well with D.M.. But this experience is something that resonated with him as well as me. This may not have been a joyous experience but definitely gave D.M. a chance to learn something about their culture. Bad experiences are necessary even when traveling. It's how we learn. And that is what D.M. has D.M.e throughout his time traveling.

It was the Friday of Parents Weekend. D.M. and I went to the same Thai place with the Nepalese owner. We sat down at a booth just a few feet away from the table we first sat at on that dreary day. We immediately jumped into the conversation seamlessly. D.M. brought up his colleagues from when he worked at the Citi Bank in the Philippines and how they attended one of their coworkers' weddings. He mentioned "my best friend was there and he's from Thailand and another one of my good friends from Japan." By being embedded in these different environments, opened up to new friendships and opportunities that are special which last a lifetime.

Later on I asked D.M. a question. "Has there ever been a time you came across one of your students from the Peace Corps?" A grin crept up onto his face. D.M. replied yes then went on telling me his experience. He was in LA and went to the Thai district to grab a quick bite after a meeting. He sat down and was greeted by the waiter. The waiter welcomes them in and then he pauses for a moment. "You were my Kru" the waiter exclaimed. Kru is an instructor in Thai. They had some small talk then left the restaurant.

D.M. mentioned this interaction was a wild experience and chimed in “Los Angeles is the place to run into people.”

Not many people tend to interact the way D.M. has when traveling, but it's something to admire and strive for. Only a few people have had the honor to travel as much as he has and won't have the same experience, but nothing is preventing us from even making an effort to remain curious. By meeting new people you are opening up potential possibilities to learn and make new and meaningful connections that could make a lifetime like the man D.M. himself. This is no travel guide but a way to gain a better understanding of other cultures and yourself. Thank you, D.M.!