



Seven Kinds of Vacation: Which Suits You Best?



Say “vacation” to seven different people, and you will trigger seven different ideas of what a vacation is. When you get a few days when you can finally get away, it would help if, first of all, we define what kind of “vacation” we need, want, or see as possible. Here are a few categories to consider.

1. Sightseeing

You travel somewhere, near or far away, and explore that place: visit museums, exhibits, and markets, attend sporting events and concerts, and tour natural wonders. Sightseeing can be high-energy and expensive, but you can also structure a light schedule on a modest budget. To save money on travel and lodgings, you have to plan ahead, but too much planning and too detailed an itinerary can be the death of a good time. Know yourself and your traveling companions and what you can reasonably manage.

2. Play

Especially when there are kids involved, some vacation time must fall into this category. A play vacation often means visits to theme parks, water parks, summer festivals, or sports activities. Because this sort of vacation requires a lot of activity, it’s not always restful for the adults in charge. Consider a family camp; parents get time off from child-care and the adults have events of their own that provide the fun and relaxation they need. A play vacation can also be quieter, exploring wildlife habitats or attending theatre festivals.

3. Time with Nature

This is perfect for people who enjoy camping, hiking, and canoeing. Although time with nature can involve a lot of activity, it also provides long evenings around a campfire, lazy hours at the beach, sleep until whenever, and time for that pile of books and magazines. Vacations with nature are important when the kids are young; if they learn to love the outdoors, they will more likely keep that connection when they’re older. Outdoor venues build in physical activity and curiosity, and in this age of constant screen-watching, limited recess at school, and ever-present junk-food temptation, activity and curiosity will become huge assets to children as they grow. Also, if you plan it well, a nature vacation can be relatively inexpensive.

4. Rest & Relaxation

If your daily life is high-stress or if you are coming off weeks or months of intense activity, the R & R vacation is probably for you. You might do this at home, but often the demands of a household make total relaxation impossible. More likely you hide out in comfortable but low-key lodgings and make a point not to create any itinerary whatsoever. You might wander and sight-see a bit, but mainly you will sleep a lot, eat good food, take walks, get a massage, read books or watch television, play cards, and otherwise “waste” hours doing nothing in particular.

5. Family Time

Most of us spend at least some vacation time traveling to see relatives or hosting relatives who travel to see us. This sort of vacation can also involve play and relaxation, especially if adult siblings bring their young families together for trips or a few days in a shared house near a beach or tourist attraction. Often, these are the vacations we remember many years later, because they included cousins, aunts and uncles, grandmas and grandpas. One advantage to intergenerational family gatherings is that there are more adults and older teenagers around to spend time with little ones, which can be a real life-saver for parents who otherwise get little downtime on vacation.

6. Planned Intensive Experiences

Now that you have time off from the daily routine, you can spend a week or two in that music class or robot camp. Or you're embarking on an educational tour or taking that class you couldn't fit into evenings and weekends. Other intensive experiences could be religious or historical pilgrimages. Quite a few people use vacation time to do service projects, such as building homes with Habitat for Humanity or helping an environmental organization plant trees or test local water sources. And there are always church and community experiences, such as vacation Bible school, mission trips, or day camps.

7. Stay-cation

Sometimes the most satisfying vacation is a few days in your own home, when you can tackle projects, stay up half the night watching your favorite movies, cook a great meal (or go out to eat), and maybe do some sightseeing in your own town. When you stay at home for vacation, it's important that you make a conscious decision about what will be the most beneficial to you—getting a lot of work done or relaxing and having some fun. Will you have more peace of mind if you dig in and get caught up on tasks around the house? Or do you really need several full nights of sleep and time for leisurely conversation with your loved ones?

In describing these vacation categories, I've stated the obvious, but I hope this will help you evaluate the kind of vacation you need and want. You will likely have to mix and match vacation styles, to accommodate the various preferences of family members. And most of us have financial constraints, so it's better to think through priorities and be intentional about the vacation we're able to take, however short, so that the money and time are spent for the best use.