

PREPARING FOR A LONG-TERM VOYAGE AND THE RETURN

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With international collaborators Viia (Finland, Ecuador), Tifenn (France) and Birgitte (Denmark)

WHO IS THIS ESSAY FOR?

Do you dream of taking a long-term voyage?

The purpose of this essay is to share a developmental perspective on long-term traveling that is based on both research and active experimentation during two personal voyages of the author: one of 3 months in Asia in 2017-2018 (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand) and another one of 4 months in South America in 2018-2019 (Chile, Peru and Ecuador).

If you wish to know yourself better and to broaden your horizons by a long-term voyage, this guide will offer you ways to prepare your return in a calm and structured state of mind. This will give you a better start for your renewed life at home.

You will be offered several tools to live a richer experience, both during and after the voyage.

WHO IS ROGER POULIN ?

Who am I?

This question will always be in a discovery mode. I am a specialist in adult **development**, I am **62 years old**, have a **master's degree in Andragogy (Adult Education)** and am a certified ACC Coach. In the last 20 years, I have coached more than 600 people in their career management skills. My coaching practice has brought me many interesting challenges, into which I have added two long-term voyages during the past two years. I undertook these voyages with both a scientific and an experimental perspective, and lived them with a developmental approach. Conducting interviews and consulting other travelers with a similar mindset.

A COLLECTIVE WORK

In particular, three of the travelers collaborated actively in the creation of this essay by giving their inspiring point of view.



Viia (A Finn living in Ecuador), who guided me to make this essay a simple and practical guide for the reader.



Tifenn from France, who guided me to see the return as an important moment for continuing the discoveries of the journey.



Birgitte from Denmark, who guided me to make this essay something that applies to more than just long-term voyages.

Their involvement has been very important for this essay, as their input has increased its relevance.

CONSULTANTS

Consultants in Montréal :



Andréanne, Yvon, Sébastien, Marie-Pier, Siri, Nuria,

Supporters :



Denise, Ann, Camille, Diane, Marie-Eve, Simon, Erin, Julie, Alain, Catherine, Pierre, Marie-Lou, Edith, Véronique, Daniel, Nathalie, Mélodie

All these people were part of the process who, both before and after the voyage, were informed of my intention for the voyages and had an indirect role to help me to integrate to my new life.

As you can see, traveling solo does not mean that we are alone

During the trips :



Sara, Daniel, Léa et Dylan, Émilie



Phoebe, Bea, Alix



Adam et Paulina



Iris



Anna



Kimberly et Marcus



Barbara et Philip



Shaya, Gavin



Ximena, Rita



Mauricio



Sayuri



Daniela



Angelica, Victoria, Francisca, Jenny, Veronica



Camila

Most of these people travelled solo for several months, and my discussions with them about my intention to travel and the methodology I used have helped me to clarify my way of thinking on the subject.

INTRODUCTION

What is a long-term voyage ?

First, I consider that traveling for at least 10 weeks in different countries can be considered as a long-term voyage, and a very long-term voyage lasts at least 24 weeks. These numbers are subjective, but they are based on several personal observations of the impact of time spent abroad.

From the moment that a holiday abroad turns into a long-term voyage, travelers face two options: to leave without any significant preparation or to make structured arrangements, accompanied by a thoughtful intention, that adds value to the voyage. Preparing for the return is part of the process, and it's just as important – if not even more important – than the preparation for the departure.

That's why (and how) I've made it my mission to explore the connection between some elements of adult developmental science and long-term traveling.

I travelled solo in Asia in 2017-2018 and in South America in 2018-2019. Although this essay focuses on a solo traveller, it can in some cases apply to a couple or a small group.

The starting point is to establish the intention of the voyage.

CHAPTER 1 - PREPARATION

Méthodology

As mentioned in the introduction, the first step of the long journey is to establish the intention of the voyage.

It is relevant to know the difference between an intention and an objective, knowing that both are important:

- The intention is a desire to change a significant dimension of our life or our being in a spiritual level.
- The objective is more concrete and takes its full value on return. The method to set objectives will be presented in the Chapter 3.

** Refer to Deepak Chopra at chopra.com under the article "5 steps to setting powerful intentions".*

The process of thinking toward intention

To establish the intention, we must start with a serious evaluation of our needs. First, make a sincere evaluation of yourself and your needs (financial, spiritual, family-related, intellectual, physical / health-related and relational) where the basic question is "what do I want more or less for each of these needs?" and use them as a preamble for meditation.

Financial :
Spiritual :
Family :
Intellectual :
Physical/Health :
Relationnal :

Following several moments of meditation, your intention will emerge. Do not ask yourself, "How am I going to get there?". The "how" will settle by itself with the help of the universe during the journey. Certainly, the gratitude of being able to live such a rich adventure towards the intention must be maintained in your meditations during the journey. You are in a solo mode, so moments to meditate will be at your fingertips daily.

The statement of your intention

During my voyage, I want :



** In my case for Asia: To finalize the process of detaching from toxic relationships (2017-2018). For South America: To celebrate a freer being in me (2018-2019).*

2. Prepare a logbook

First, write your intention for the voyage.

The diary in which you write the experiences lived, both pleasant and difficult, will allow you to be more aware of your emotions. It will also preserve small stories that offer valuable life lessons. The daily use of the logbook will allow you to be more aware during the journey, recognize the learning moments and reflect to them more easily during and after the voyage.

In addition, keeping a daily logbook makes it easier to share your adventure with others and communicate the changes that have occurred in you when back home.

3. Establish anchor points

Anchor points are the most important people in your life. Meet those people who support you in your long-term adventure and share your intention with them. Set up an agreement to meet them right after your return so you can share your experiences with them.

Take the opportunity to invite them to write a message in your logbook before departure. Probabilities that all of them will be happy to write a message to you are very high, that was my case for both voyages.

Their messages will be useful to you in difficult times, because there will be some.

For me, these people were inspiring and motivating, both during the trip and after I returned home.

CHAPTER 2 – THE JOURNEY

Some personal experiences from my 2018-2019 logbook

Read the intention of the voyage regularly.

Take the time to write down your behaviours, your emotions and what you like and dislike in the people you meet.

During the trip, ask the people who make an impact on you to write a message in your logbook.

Once a week, read what you have written and the messages you have received and describe how you feel. This will be extremely useful when you return home to understand the impact of the voyage, or even how it has transformed you. The little encounters, although they are often ephemeral, will mark you and have a significant impact on you. It is therefore good to rewrite the events surrounding these meetings in order to go through them emotionally and to make the most out of them.

In this way the logbook becomes an anchor to yourself in this adventure where constant changes will take you out of your comfort zone. It's a way of letting both external and internal discoveries settle into you.

Some personal experiences from my 2018-2019 logbook

In the three experiences that I chose to share with you, the logbook was useful because it allowed me to preserve valuable information, especially emotions.

1st experience

On a trip to "My Son" in Vietnam, I met Angelica from Chile. I shared with her that one of my dreams was to go to South America. She told me to let her know if someday it would happen. As soon as I mentioned my landing in Santiago, Chile on December 10, 2019, she invited me to spend a few days on their cherry farm in Chillan. Her family picked me up from Santiago on December 16th and we drove about 4 hours before arriving at the farm. I had the privilege of participating in the cherry harvesting activities and staying at this Chilean family for 4 days. I never imagined one day living such an experience. It was an unforgettable moment of the voyage.

For me, this experience is a genuine example: if the intention is clear, the universe will give us an unpredictable adventure.

2nd experience

Although I have mentioned the positive sides of the long-term travel, remember that you will most likely be faced with moments of uncertainty or difficulty. These challenges will give you access to significant learnings upon your return.

*After 5 tiring days on Easter Island, I flew to Santiago at 13:00 and land around 21:30. My flight to Cusco Peru was at 6:00 the next day. I opted to stay at the airport since I had to be there at 3:00. When I did the check-in, I was denied **boarding because I didn't have a ticket to leave Peru. I accepted my fate and at 5:20** I headed to the counter of Latam-airlines to buy two tickets: one for Cusco, Peru, and another 12 days later from Cusco to La Paz in Bolivia. I explained to the attendant what had happened to me: I was exhausted, and I had to wait for another 9 hours at the airport. I asked her gently what my options were. She directs me to the manager of the check-in desks to validate if it ~~is~~ was possible to register my luggage immediately, which would give me an access to the VIP lounge of the airline. To my surprise, he agreed, and I was able to take a shower, sleep a little and eat well before flying to Cusco.*

This moment of the voyage showed me unknown internal forces in me, including the ability to be highly adaptable to a difficult situation.

3^e expérience

I was in the Galapagos islands, and it was my penultimate day of an intense 13-day trip to "Islands Hopping". I wanted to "relax" and opted for some beach time and a snorkeling excursion.

Other passengers accompanied me on this excursion. There ~~are~~ were three couples: one from France (Olivier and Sandrine), one from Holland (Kimberly and Marcus) and the last one from Austria (Barbara and Philip.) The chemistry between the participants was strong and in a short time, we had all agreed to join for a friendly dinner in the evening. At this moment, everything took another dimension. With the help of the crew, I catch a tuna fish and since I fished it, I was able to keep it. The couple from Holland informed us that they are both chefs, and there was only a kitchen missing from the possibility of a great feast! Once at the port, I called the owner of the "hostal" (Jonathan) and explained the situation to him. I asked if it ~~is~~ was possible to use their kitchen and not only he accepted but he also offered us the help of his cook, and in no time seven strangers became a group and then a team that, led by the two chefs, prepared a memorable dinner.

During the dinner, the group gave a toast to my agility to bring people together to a common project. Moreover, their comments in my logbook. Still make a big impact on me.

I was aware and nurtured my intention to celebrate the freedom to be who I am in all three experiences I shared with you. Of course, many other significant moments have taken place and many of them have improved my consciousness.

CHAPITRE 3 – THE RETURN AND THE AWARENESS

Maintaining the logbook throughout the voyage and following a clear intention makes a much easier return to everyday life back home.

Upon my return home, I reviewed my voyage by reading the logbook and was open to share it with the people who had written me a message before I left. It is therefore important to meet them, both consultants and travel supporters, to share our experiences and our new identity. Thanks to the review of the logbook and the conversations that followed, I was able to become fully aware of what the journey had brought me (including a lot of awareness).

Here are some examples of the awareness gained:

- My self-esteem is now a lot better
- My self-confidence has grown
- Every day I have a better and better access to my creativity
- I know I can trust my intuition
- I learned Spanish
- I fully recognize my resilience
- I am more comfortable to share without filters
- I increased my agility to read body language
- Managing my energy is more important than performance
- I am much more adaptable to unexpected situations

Integrating awareness into my projects

By its nature, the voyage creates a dynamism where every morning decisions and actions are taken. Upon return, once the backpack has been emptied, the dynamism is gone. The Mind Map and the objectives associated brings a creative sense that allows us to see and feel that we are progressing towards something significant. At that moment we become the stimulating agent rather than the environment. The strength of the Mind Map allows to visualize the big picture in order to determine the energies and resources required to foster a more satisfying re-integration in our country.

In order to maintain the dynamism that the journey has brought it's essential to evaluate my needs and to establish a clear intention for the future. The process for the intention is the same as in chapter one.

Then I have created a "Mind Map" with a new intention and also established objectives accordingly.

By considering my awareness and my needs, I was able to identify relevant projects for me. With the help of objectives (SMART), I was able to pursue these projects towards beautiful achievements that are in balance with the life that suits me best.

In order to set objectives, I used the SMART method.

SMART method

Specific
Mesurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time-based

Setting objectives is important since our environment doesn't keep changing constantly as during the voyage. The change must be created by new projects and objectives and aligned with the intention identified. Also having objectives keep you in action.

Here is an example of a SMART objective.

Write a book describing an applicable approach to the preparation of the departure and the return of a long-term voyage, which is simple and integrates the learning process upon my return by the beginning of September 2019.

After setting the objectives, you are ready to elaborate the Mind Map.

Mind Map

The established intention is the center of your Mind Map.

The mission and intention I have established for my life is to be just as dynamic as I was during my four-month trip to South America.

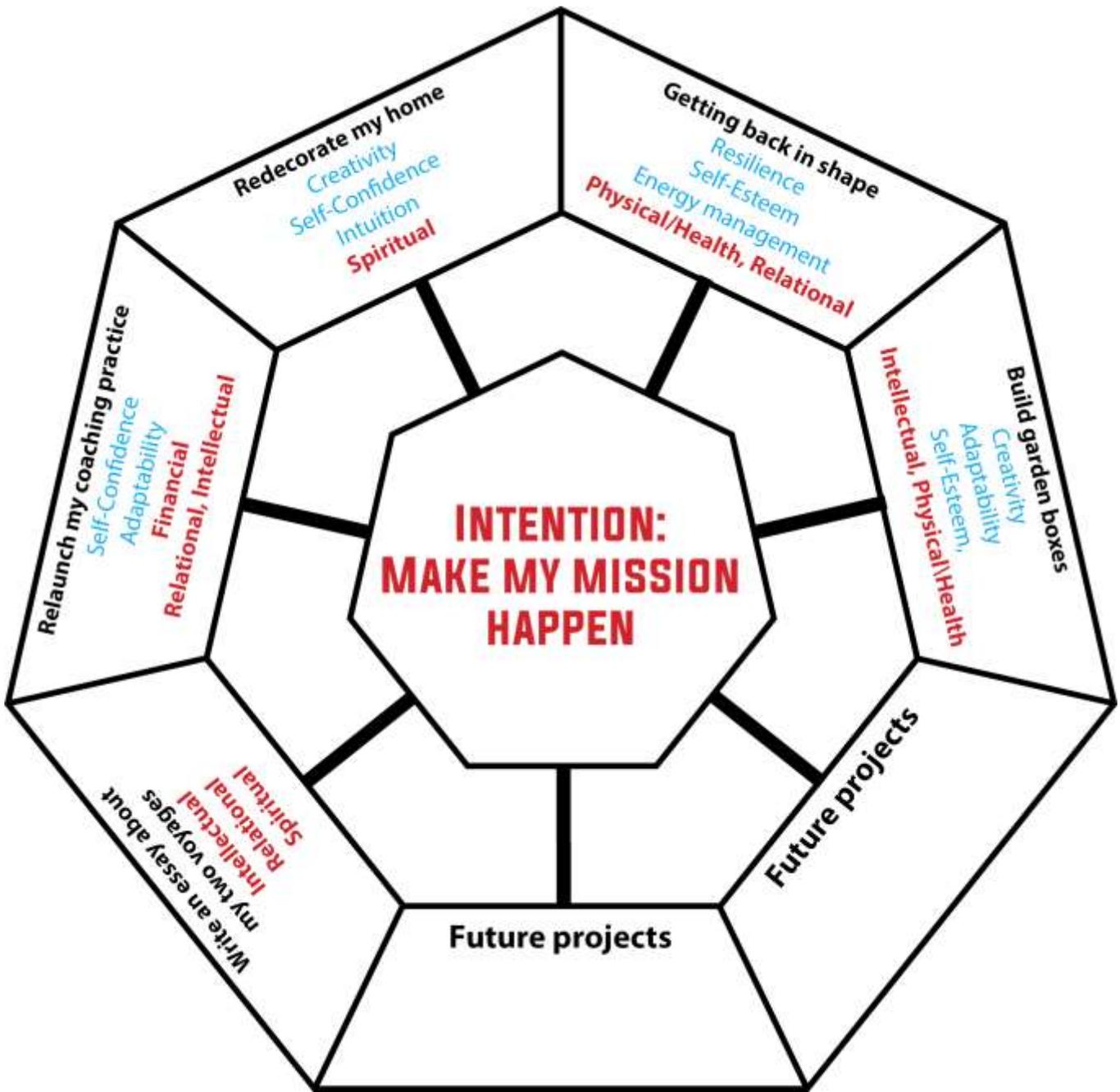
Here is my mission:

My mission, which gives meaning to my life, is to continually be inspiring and inspired by and for people of all ages who revolves around my vitality I will nourish this vitality by achieving realistic goals (spiritual, relational, physical, and intellectual) all of them-seasoned with audacity and wisdom.

Achieving these objectives nourishes my intention as well as my mission. Combining the appropriate awareness of the voyage with the objectives allows me to transfer them to my everyday life and continue the dynamism that the journey provided.

The objectives and achievements of my Mind Map played a big role in my return, because I am taking decisions and actions with a purpose that integrates energy and joy to my everyday life.

MIND MAP



* reference to needs in red (chapter 1)

* reference to awareness in blue (chapter 3)

CONCLUSION

The sustainable development of an adult consists of three stages:

- Acknowledgment (the information before departure)
- Active experimentation (the journey)
- Awareness (The approach I have presented in this book, using the logbook as an important tool)

The present approach has taught me a lot, made me more aware and allowed me to make new discoveries about myself. The process has been an investment for to the future.

Be daring as wise in your travelling projects, because coming back home in shape is important.

