

Though I have travelled much I am a bad traveller. The good traveller has the gift of surprise. He is perpetually interested by the differences he finds between what he knows at home and what he sees abroad. If he has a keen sense of the absurd he finds constant matter for laughter in the fact that the people among whom he is do not wear the same clothes as he does, and he can never get over his astonishment that men may eat with chop-sticks instead of forks or write with a brush instead of with a pen. Since everything is strange to him he notices everything, and according to his humour can be amusing or instructive. But I take things for granted so quickly that I cease to see anything unusual in my new surroundings. It seems to me so obvious for the Burman to wear a coloured "paso" that only by a deliberate effort can I make the observation that he is not dressed as I am. It seems to me just as natural to ride in a rickshaw as in a car, and to sit on the floor as on a chair, so that I forget that I am doing something odd and out-of-the-way. I travel because I like to move from place to place, I enjoy the sense of freedom it gives me, it pleases me to be rid of ties, responsibilities, duties, I like the unknown; I meet odd people who amuse me for a moment and sometimes suggest a theme for a composition; I am often tired of myself and I have a notion that by travel I can add to my personality and so change myself a little. I do not bring back from a journey quite the same self that I took.

W. Somerset Maugham
