

# The Beauty Around You

– my Love for Travel

## You can fall asleep on a motorcycle – The five things I learned while exploring Europe

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I bet you are thinking “There is not way you can fall asleep on a motorcycle. You’d fall”

Well... Imagine a tired 13-year-old who has spent the whole day wearing black driving gear under the scorching hot sun of Italy, a child who has spent the last two hours singing out loud while being comfortably covered from the wind by their mum or dad who is driving. Sleep was definitely one of those things I had mastered; waking up when banging on my head to the driver’s back was a norm back then. Singing, well that is another thing.

*Motorcycle travel was the highlight of my childhood.*

From driving through the fog in the moors and mountains of Scotland to singing until I could no more on an endless drive in the Autobahn and the Alps. And

getting lost when I pretended I knew where we were when it was my turn to navigate; I am not the best at admitting am wrong. Looking back, I don’t think I ever appreciated all that I experienced, nowhere near as much as I should have.



Mum is driving. Scotland. 2004.



The crew. Scotland. 2004.

And that's why I am writing this post now, to let you know of the five most important lessons that I, now almost 10 years later, still remember.



Scotland. 2004.

**1.) Travelling with your family totally beats travelling alone. Even when your parents get to say "I told you so" when you get cheated in Venice.**

I guess we were quite a sight back then, mum and dad on their motorcycles with two girls travelling behind them. What's a better ice breaker than pulling up with two under 12-year-old hooligans to a loading dock of a cruise ship; me and my sister casually walking around carrying the driving gear amidst the truck drivers while mum and dad secured their bikes onto the ship. I can still remember the joke I told in Scotland, how the bunk bed was shaking when everyone was laughing hysterically. And the time when me and Jaana got totally cheated in Venice (losing 5€ was not as worse as realizing the paper dolls we bought could actually not walk.. Dad's "I told you so" was so deserved that day.). The day when my thumb got crushed between the fire door of a cruise ship on the second day of our trip, and having to wear dad's gloves for a week. The feeling of running around in circles every time mum added moisturizer on my badly burned back in Italy.



Germany. 2003.



Somewhere on the Alps. 2006.

And the time when I got angry over something in Switzerland, locked myself in the shower and sang Frederik's "Tsingis Kahn & Rasputin" (*oh my god, the song choices...*) only to calm down and find out people down in the hostel reception had heard it all – well at least my family got to have a laugh!

2-4 weeks of intense travel with your family every summer for six years can to some sound like the start of a horror story; to us it was a marvellous mixture of "I hate you – I love you" roller-coaster of emotions and a true learning experience. I love my family.

**2.) It pays to learn the language beforehand. Though as proven by dad many times; when you don't have a common language, speaking Finnish loud enough will usually get things done.**

"When there's a will, there's a way" is true especially when talking about getting food. Oh there is not much I would not have done to get ice cream; not speaking the local language – or more than a few words of English – was no way near good enough a reason to stop me and my 8-year-old sister from getting ice cream in Slovenia. And the lack of common language never stopped mum and dad

from asking for directions, or finding accommodation in little villages throughout France and Italy. And I cannot begin to explain how proud I felt when being able to somewhat understand directions and buy train tickets in a small Polish town using my pretty much non-existent Russian skills as a last resort.

*The courage learned at a young age as been a real asset in life later on – who cares about grammar as long as you get your point across.*



Italy. 2003.

**3.) Try out new foods. Though potato and fish pizza sucks, and don't drink the water meant for washing your hands in some Asian restaurant.**

I was really picky, can still remember some morning buffets at cruise ships when my diet consisted of 10 Carelian pastries (rye & rice) and an egg. Or the time when I tried to order a potato-fish-dill-mince-tomato pizza with just bolognese sauce in Latvia – ended up getting everything but that. And damn I still cannot stand the smell of salted peanuts and dried salami – the things my sister and dad loved to have for snack in small confined spaces we slept in. I think I got scarred for life.

But overall, being there to try the “real” Italian ice cream and pizza, the amazing baguettes and croissants in France, and breakfast cheese rolls in German hostels definitely tickled the taste buds of a young Finn used to a quite well non-varied diet by choice. My love and passion for food was born back then; a diet always fails if I am presented with pastries straight from the oven.

**4.) People are nice. Talking to them is fun. Even the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club members were real nice and polite.**

I like to talk. To learn from people, to get inspired (<https://href.li/?https://theoneswhomadeit.wordpress.com/>), and I have always been curious about my surroundings – pretty chatty overall. Even though because of the language barrier, the childhood trips mainly consisted of joking around with my sister and telling stupid stories in Finnish over the radio phones to entertain ourselves over the long drives, I think being exposed to a variety of people from different cultures and backgrounds has definitely helped shape the view I hold on foreigners and other cultures nowadays. Camping grounds and hostels are the best places to learn the art of small talk. And having a sister is a blessing when you are bored and there are no interesting people around.





On a train through Germany I think. 2006.

I think a child does not discriminate unless being taught to do so, of course something different can be perceived as scary and avoidable as a first instinct, but encouraging your children to engage with others from an early age is one of the best lessons you can teach them. Both in your home country and abroad. Amidst all the terror and instability the world is experiencing right now, a non-judgmental and open approach is the key to achieving integration and cross-culture co-operation.

**5.) And finally. Adventures and an adrenaline rush are amazingly addictive. From roller-coasters and 200 kmph Autobahn experiences to now being in love with skydiving and bungee jumps – this world we live in is full of cool stuff. Make the most of it.**

Self-explanatory. Life life to the fullest – you will regret if you don't. Don't come up with excuses and postpone making your dreams a reality – with hard work everything is possible. That's what my parents taught me, that's the guideline that has got me where I am in life – start with small things and you'll be surprised at what you can achieve.

I don't have a motorcycle licence yet, but I will hopefully get to follow in my parents' footsteps one day. Why stay at home, when there's such a beautiful world out there.



Col Du Calibier – the Alps. 2006.

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I cannot thank my parents enough for saving like crazy so we could have that one holiday together over the summer when growing up – and for having enough faith in us girls by letting us have a part of the planning process as well. I am aware of how privileged childhood I had, and thus this post is both a big thank you to my amazing family, and at a same time an encouragement for anyone out there wondering if they should explore the world or show it to their children

*– Do it. It is the best gift you can give.*



Me admiring the serpentine roads at the Alps. 2006.

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PS. My dad has written a travel journal (<https://href.li/?http://koti.mbnet.fi/laurahan/index.htm>) in Finnish about all this. In case you need some practical tips re motorcycles and travelling with two kids, it might be helpful. It will be available in English also, one day in the future, when I find the time to translate it all... 😊 Thanks mum and dad for the photos used on this post btw ❤️

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