

The art of *Slow travel*

Tracy Morris, mother from travelling family The Blonde Nomads, shares the wonders of life in the slow lane, and how we can all benefit from embracing some elements of 'slow' in our lives.

"Look Mum, I'm a sloth," my three-year-old Ziggy whispers as he slowly crawls along the cave floor – which, I have just been told, is covered with layers of compacted guano. Mmhm ... bat droppings. Following years of foot traffic it now looks like plain old dirt.

We are deep inside the Capricorn Caves in central Queensland on the 'Family Adventure Caving' tour. I gently tell my little sloth-boy to make like a cheetah and hurry it along, as Mummy is keen to squeeze on outta here before the colony of micro bats wakes up and does a fly-by, adding to their guano collection!

We've been camped up here at the caves for four nights now and have spent our days

travelling back in time, discovering fossils of ancient creatures, meeting giant prehistoric beasts, visiting the site where a Tasmanian tiger fossil was found and squeezing through tiny covered holes at sloth speed.

Speed dating

Like most tourist attractions, many travellers choose to visit the caves as they pass through or take a day trip from Rockhampton. They spend a few hours, gaze in awe at the famous formations on the Cathedral Cave Tour, then hurry off to their next destination. It's a lovely experience, and usually one of many on a full travel itinerary. It's a bit like speed dating – you





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the locals do – straight on the hot coals. It was a perfect example of why we like to take a moment to connect with people.

Want in on the action?

The beauty of slow travel is that you are in control of your journey. If you would like a piece of this tasty pie then just plan a trip with no exact destination. Grab the map and go! Or better yet, leave the map behind. For us, slow travel is all about choosing experiences over seeing the sights. It isn't about skipping touristy attractions, but simply how you decide to enjoy them. Make time to enjoy the simplest of things, ones that aren't necessarily the most popular ... and take a page out of Ziggy's book: be like a sloth. ●

rock up, say hi, sample what's on offer, take a selfie for 'the gram' then zip away. It's a great way to see a lot in a limited time frame, but for us, something has shifted and we no longer like to 'speed date' as we travel, but rather choose to invest in a long-term relationship with each destination.

Life in the slow lane

Our choice of slow travel may have something to do with the fact that we have two mini nomads with us. Marii (6) and Ziggy (3) have no doubt taught us that our adventures are best when it's more about the journey, the experiences and the people you cross paths with along the way. Having kids naturally makes you slow down and take notice of the little things: a spider spinning its web, the jellyfish floating along at the water's edge, or the bird collecting sticks to build its nest.

It's safe to say we have now found a good rhythm that works well for us, with a mix of adventuring, working, schooling, driving and rest days. At times, itineraries, bad weather or work deadlines can throw this concept out the window for a short period. So we pull back on the travel, make a conscious effort to slow down and prioritise.

Making connections

Slowing down always gives us the opportunity to meet and enjoy time with fellow travellers too. There is a real sense of community within the nomads of Australia



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and you never know what saying a quick "hello" to someone could lead to.

It feels like it was only yesterday that we were slugging through mud in the mangroves on the Dampier Peninsula with a local stranger turned good friend, Tao.

Even though we had just met, we confidently followed in Tao's muddy footprints along the banks of a waterway that was – no joke – called Croc Creek. We were hunting for mud crabs, of course, and would definitely not have had the know-how to navigate the sandy 4WD tracks to get there, or know where was considered safe for us to wander in croc country.

Full of excitement and still buzzing from our day of adventure, we camped up on a hill at the water's edge. We chatted away, sharing travel tales around the campfire as Tao showed us how to cook the crabs like



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01 Travelling to remote locations 02 Lots of time for family fun 03 The slow travel lifestyle 04 The Blonde Nomads family 05 Teaching the kids along the way. All images © Tracy Morris/The Blonde Nomads