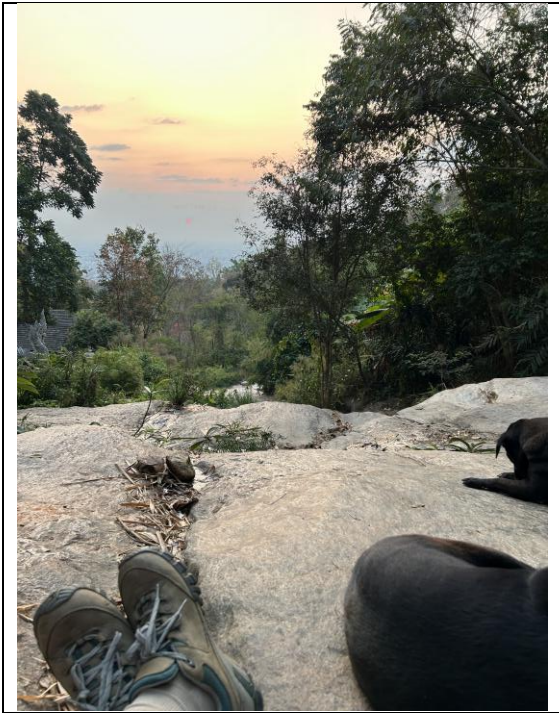


The Art of Linger: How slow travel allows you to savor the world

Travel can often be a race against time—a checklist of sights, a blur of cities, and a suitcase that’s never quite unpacked. But what happens if you slow down and let a place seep into your soul?

Karen Frankola’s eight-month journey around the world through twelve countries allowed her to live more like a local and gain lasting memories, rather than collecting selfies at landmarks. But she told Courtyard residents on January 15th that even if you don’t have weeks to explore, you can apply slow travel hacks to make your trips more authentic and even restorative.



Enjoying the view from Wat Pha Lat, a Buddhist temple in a jungle outside Chiang Mai, Thailand.

What Is Slow Travel?

Slow travel is about trading quantity for quality. The core principles are simple:

- Stay longer in one place
- Journey less, experience more

- Live like a local
- Seek connection over consumption
- Embrace flexibility

It's not about how many sights you see, but how deeply you experience them. Slow travel cuts down on crowds, unpacking, and exhaustion. It's a [growing trend](#) that's particularly well-suited for those of us who may have more time than energy.

Chiang Mai, Thailand: Massages, Temples and Great Food

Karen spent a month at a [co-living residence](#) in Chiang Mai, paying just \$800 a month for a private room and bathroom, enjoying shared meals and a community that felt like family. She was told about the best masseuse in town, where \$18 bought ninety minutes of bliss. Her housemates organized game nights and outings, sharing tips and splitting costs. Karen wandered aimlessly to temples, sometimes joining Buddhist meditation sessions, and even climbed a waterfall barefoot.



Game night with housemates in Chiang Mai.

Paris: Lesser-Known Museums, Chateaus and Biking Along the Seine

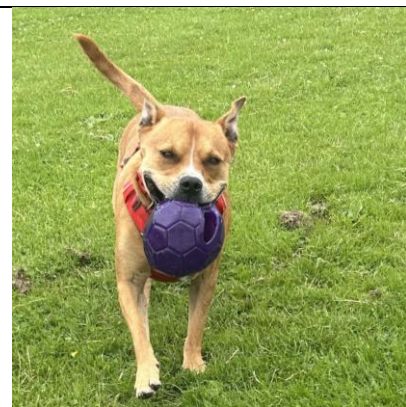
Spending thirty days in Paris, Karen overdosed on [museums](#), [biked](#) along the Seine, and worked out in park “gyms.” She rented a studio apartment a mile west of the Eiffel Tower for \$1,500 a month, often microwaving grocery meals, and taking inexpensive day trips by [train](#) to Versailles and Giverny.



Biking along the Seine to beat the crowds at Monet's house at Giverny.

Scotland: Eight Weeks of Community

Glasgow isn't a big tourist hub, but Karen never got bored during her six weeks there. She joined pub trivia nights with Scots who loved the NFL, did early-morning circuit training, and took day trips with her flat mates and their grandkids. Pet sitting in tiny villages left plenty of time for long walks, biking, and watercolor painting. Her Glasgow apartment cost \$5,400 a month for two bedrooms and two baths, but she saved money with a [UK Senior Railcard](#) and monthly bike rentals. Lingering in Scotland helps her dodge the rain and enjoy less-visited sights such as the [Falkirk Kelpies](#), [Stirling Castle](#) and the [Waverly paddle steamer](#).



Painting football time with Bruce in a Scottish village.

Sorry, I Don't Think Slow Travel Will Work For Me

Karen told her neighbors she doesn't expect them to spend months traveling the world, but she challenged skeptics to apply slow travel hacks to even short trips to make experiences more authentic and avoid other tourists.

1. Not Enough Time?

If you only have a week or so, stay in a large city the whole time. Paris has 150 museums and dozens of nearby chateaus. Many of your home tasks can be done on the road. Karen described mixing sightseeing with working on her laptop or pursuing hobbies. She even did her taxes in Thailand.

2. Not Enough Money?

"A tight budget forces you to travel close to the ground, meeting and communicating with the people," says Rick Steves. Karen found this true throughout Europe and Asia, taking public transportation, heating up grocery meals in a small kitchen, and avoiding hotels.



Tuna salad lunch at the nearly deserted Chateau de Maisons-Laffitte outside Paris.

Not Enough Structure or Support?

Traveling independently has never been easier. Karen used ChatGPT and Gemini to plan itineraries, Google Maps for public transport, and Google Translate for communication.

Don't be afraid to mix up slow travel with sights-based journeys. In places with less infrastructure, such as Turkey, she took a guided bus tour. You can also travel independently and take day trips as needed.

ChatGPT ▾

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What are some good day trips from Paris by train for someone who likes art?

Here are some great **art-focused day trips you can take from Paris by train** — perfect if you want to explore beyond the museums within the city itself:

🎨 Classic Art & Artist Homes

1. Giverny — Claude Monet's Gardens

A must for Impressionism lovers. Trains run from **Paris Saint-Lazare to Vernon-Giverny** (about 50–60 min), then a short shuttle or walk to **Claude Monet's house and gardens** — the very landscapes that inspired his masterworks. Adventures by L... +1

2. Auvers-sur-Oise — Van Gogh Country

About an hour from Paris by train from **Gare du Nord**, this village was Vincent van Gogh's last home and setting for many of his final paintings. You can visit his **grave and the Auberge Ravoux** (where he lived), explore ↓ galleries, and see sites he painted. Friends Made... +3

An example how AI offers customized itineraries.

Not Enough Sights?

Karen said she was never bored, even when she spent twelve days dog-sitting in a small Welsh village. In Chiang Mai, she wandered through Old Town, exploring a fraction of its 300 temples, joining Buddhist meditations, and taking day trips to elephant sanctuaries and the Himalayan foothills.



Took a local bus from a Welsh village near Wrexham to walk the Chester city walls with Rocky.

Baby Steps Toward Slow Travel

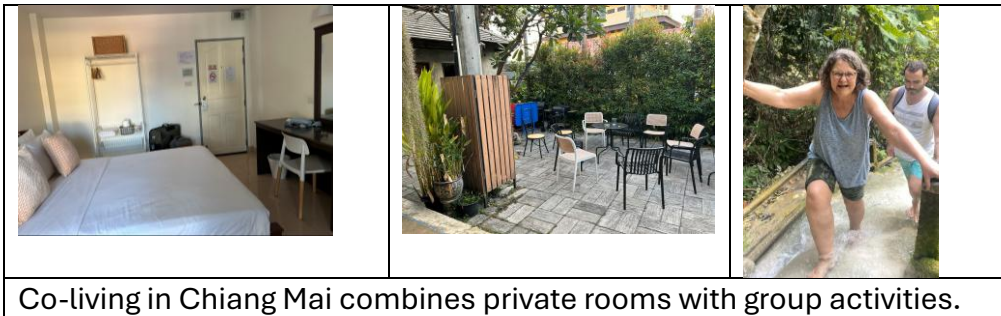
If you're new to slow travel, or skeptical, start small. Here are some ideas:

- Cut your normal number of destinations in half.
- Take public transportation, bike, or walk whenever possible instead of a guided tour or Uber.
- Try alternatives to hotels. For example, Karen stayed at a London School of Economics dormitory, sprawling out in a large private room and bathroom, and using the shared kitchen, free breakfast and laundry facilities. Try:
 - [Booking.com](#), [Airbnb](#), [VRBO](#)
 - [Landing](#) (US), [HometoGo](#), [LiveAnywhere](#), [Flatio](#)
 - Dormitories-[universityrooms.com](#)
 - Monasteries-[www.monasteries.com](#)
- Limit sightseeing to half a day, and spend the rest ambling, attending local events, or doing everyday things like getting a haircut or joining a gym. Easy ways to “live like a local” include:
 - English-language Meetups ([meetup.com](#))
 - Facebook groups ([Host a sister](#) connects women for lunch dates or even home stays)
 - Language classes/conversation groups
- On cruises, choose longer itineraries with smaller ports and plan DIY adventures instead of taking the crowded, overpriced ship excursions. Karen used [Cruise Critic](#) to plan bike rides in Korea and train excursions in Japan.
- Consider [Road Scholar](#) tours, which combine authentic experiences with more conventional sight-seeing.
- If you're travelling with a companion, don't always spend the entire day together. It's easier to meet locals and discover the unexpected when you're setting the pace.

Bigger Steps to Slow Travel

If you want to try spending several weeks in one location, consider these options:

- [Trusted Housesitters](#) – Stay in someone’s house or flat for free in exchange for taking care of their pets. When Karen walked dogs in UK villages, friendly neighbors who already knew her companion welcomed her warmly.
- Co-living/co-working typically means having your own bedroom and bath while sharing a house with others. In Thailand, Karen shared meals, game nights and day trips with digital nomads from all over the world. Some co-living spaces are specifically targeted for seniors, but those are typically more expensive. Facebook has many co-living groups or look at [Coliving.com](#) or [nomadstays.com](#).



- Language immersion typically offers several weeks in a destination, mixing classes, conversation and sightseeing. Try [EF](#), which handles accommodation or [Lingua Service](#).
- Volunteering – Try [International Volunteer HQ](#) or a local church that sponsors trips to developing areas.
- Supported hiking or biking journeys is the ultimate in slow travel. Check out [Wildland trekking](#) or [Active adventures](#). Of course, many seniors like to road trip throughout the States or Canada.



Hiking the Dingle Way along the Irish coast.

Must-Have Apps

It's never been easier to travel independently with the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT or Gemini. Download them as phone apps or use in a browser to plan an itinerary based on your interests. Just be sure to verify critical information by clicking on the provided links.

Karen said her other go-to apps (all free) are:

- Google Maps
 - Use the bus icon in Directions for public transport within a city.  It usually doesn't work well for trains – instead use an AI tool, Trainline, or a country-specific rail app.
 - Download a map of your destination BEFORE you arrive so you can navigate even without data or Wi-Fi. Delete afterwards to free up phone storage.
- Google Translate
 - Also download a language before you arrive for online use. The camera feature is especially helpful for reading menus or food labels.
- WhatsApp provides reliable texting, calls and video. If you're on a tour, it connects you with your guide and new friends from around the world.
- The IQAir AirVisul app shows real time air quality, which can vary greatly day-to-day and even during one day, which allows you to plan outdoor activities. Before booking a trip, use the [website](#) to access historical data. For example, Karen didn't realize spring is a bad time to visit Chiang Mai.

PM2.5 legend



Rank	City	2024	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
720	 Chiang Mai, Thailand	26.4	25.1	36	71.6	76.8	27.3	6.6

- [Libby](#) is ideal for listening to books while you wander or look out a train window. You can also download e-books to your phone or tablet. It's free with a Durham Library card.
- Karen also recommends listening to [travel](#) or podcasts specific to your destination during your wandering.

- [Klook](#) makes it easy to book day trips or attractions, often with discounts.
-

Don't Forget...

- Check with the [State Dept.](#) on how long you're allowed to stay, visa requirements, and the newest wrinkle – Electronic Travel Authorizations for visa-exempt countries. The UK now requires an [ETA](#) and the [Schengen Zone](#) (most of Europe) is expected to begin requiring one in late 2026.
 - Emergency medical and evacuation [insurance](#) is reasonably priced and essential in less-developed areas. For minor issues or to refill prescriptions, just pay out of pocket. Karen visited doctors in Tokyo, Paris and Glasgow with no difficulty.
 - Trip interruption and cancellation [insurance](#) can be pricey, so consider carefully. For example, Karen insured her two-week bus tour through Turkey since it required arriving in Istanbul on a certain day.
 - Check with your phone carrier on data plans and use Wi-Fi whenever possible. For example, most museums, train/bus stations and restaurants offer it.
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Overwhelmed?

Challenge yourself to try some baby steps on your next trip and build from there. For more information and videos, you can follow Karen at “bucketlistvixen” on Instagram or YouTube. Or just ask her for help, especially with apps. She hopes you'll find slow travel offers a better way to engage with the world, or at least you'll return home a bit less exhausted!

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