

# Lost in Travel

The moment is here. I've waited all week, all month, for this. Packing always morphs into a stress fueled process of remembering anything that could be even remotely useful. What if I need *that* shirt? What if a surprise occasion comes up and I need *those* shoes? Did I even pack the toothpaste? I have all the symptoms of overpacking with no foreseeable cure. The butterflies thrash in my stomach before I even step foot outside the house; perhaps it's because I can never sleep the night before. The prospects of leaving home and going somewhere unexpected and new are enough to keep me awake. The morning of is always a hazy rush of last minute list consultations and scoping out my room one last time. The feelings of panic and anxiety become very real as I finally arrive at the airport. There is nothing better than hearing the sounds a suitcase makes as the wheels glide against the pavement. With a ticket and passport in my hand, I am ready to begin on a journey. There is no turning back a little voice says, as I walk towards security.

Airports are one of my favorite places in the whole world. There is no feeling that comes even slightly close to the excitement of travel. Although I spend way too much time trying to plan for every possible mishap, the unfortunate situations are what I remember most from trips. I have a rather unlucky tendency to get lost, everywhere, because my sense of direction doesn't exist. It's embarrassing to admit that as a senior who has been to the same school for four years, I still have trouble locating some classrooms. This summer I had the wonderful opportunity to visit New York for the first time during a weeklong college trip.

New York is a place that has a rhythm so different from the one I was used to. The first unsettling thing was the pace of everyone who lived there. I think everyone can agree that there is nothing leisurely about New York City. In the first

day, my family and I had gotten lost several times. We had gotten off at the wrong subway stops, took the wrong turn here and there, and ended up somewhere completely different. It was frustrating because it felt like we were walking in circles most of the time. After a stroll through Central Park, we were supposed to be on our way to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. However, with some bad GPS directions, we had wandered the entire course of Central Park without finding the correct exit. Similarly finding places to eat was the most stressful part of my week in New York.

We may have gotten lost several times but because of it, we had gotten such a good picture of New York as a whole. We were forced to spend the time looking at parks and architecture that we would have otherwise overlooked. A trip isn't just a checklist of places to visit but rather taking in a city, one street at a time. Sometimes being lost is simply the best way to get to know a new place. It gives you the time, and motivation, to explore around, albeit it probably is to find a way out. I often forget to smell the roses and to stop and look around. Even if bad directional skills aren't the most desirable trait, they give me the chance to find things I never even knew existed.

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## Things Can Change

Sometimes... Well, often, it feels like things can't ever get better. But things can change. They can become better and amazing... They can speak to you and help you grow if you just give it time. Most of the time if something bad happens, or you get bad news you automatically think "this is the end" or "it's only downhill from here."

That isn't true.

Every experience, no matter the severity of good or bad, can be beneficial. Onions make you cry when you're cutting them, and it hurts like hell, but they also can make one hell of a meal. It can be difficult to distinguish a line of whether or not an experience is worth it, but usually you can take at least one good thing away from it. Trust me, I know.

I was feeling neglected, like my family was simply no longer a real family. I was in despair, which was only made worse at the discovery of breast cancer's insidious presence in my mother. I had known people who had cancer, known people who had known people with cancer, even my aunt had cancer – but I had never seen it up close and experienced it first hand. As per my stubborn personality, I refused to believe it. I attempted to refute any piece of evidence the doctor presented me with... I used statistics, illusory correlation, and case studies of a random individual who had negative connections to my mother. When the truth finally wound up and punched me in the face I immediately jumped to the worst case... Which one can imagine would be a somewhat typical response especially for an over-emotional teenage girl going through her last two years of high school.

It took me a while to come out and tell someone, and when I did it happened to be someone I had only just met. It seemed easier that way, they didn't see me regularly and the information couldn't plague our friendship with pitied hugs and sad glances. That person essentially aided me in the early stages of not only coping with it, but also in being there for my mother. And we became friends because of it. And because of him I was able to grow closer to my mother again and to sit in the hospital with her when she needed me.

Hospitals are atrocious. They are busy and smell like old people and scare the living shit out of me. It is weirdly hard for me to sit in a hospital for more than five minutes without

crying, maybe because I flat out thought that they were a place where people went to die. That, I learned, wasn't true either. In our wing everyone was hooked up to these beeping machines and had lines attached to these things implanted in their bodies, it felt like these people were simply being refueled at a gas station but they were really being poisoned in order to heal. But these people... They were optimistic and laughed and shared stories about their youth and whoever was with them always had a smile on their face and sympathetic yet hopeful eyes. You could tell that everyone was rooting for each other even though they were all strangers before they got sick. In a way, cancer bonded people.

My neighborhood banded together to set up a program for my mother. Meals every day so she didn't have to cook or worry about her family not having food. Her friends set up a schedule to take her to appointments so she never had to be alone. I've never seen something like that. It took the whole village, but we kept her going. We got her through chemotherapy – one of the most taxing and treacherous things someone may have to go through. It's long hours at a hospital accompanied by hair loss, weight loss, nausea... But she did it because of this. And she may not be done, because radiation is next, but she will finish strong due to these people.

To be honest I had lost any form of religion or clarity or faith in humanity... I thought if there was someone watching out for us why would all these terrible things happen to such a miraculous woman. But this happening to her made her stronger, more of a role model, even more amazing than she already was. Not only that, but I realized that no matter what, there is hope. People are still good. Things can go right even if they start out bad.

No one wants to go through something like this, and of course I wish it never happened. But I do look on it as something that taught me responsibility, faith, religion, a new found appreciation for people, and most of all a better relationship

with my incredible and durable mother.

Things can and will get better. Look towards the horizon and you just might be able to see the sun rising.

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## The Race to College

When do you start? How do you know what colleges to apply for? What's the difference between early decision and early action? These are only a few of the many questions that are running through our stressed-out teenage brains. It can be overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be.

Getting started on the college search is not as difficult as it's cracked up to be, and is much less crazy than people describe it. One can start as early as freshmen year, but it's not necessary! Getting "ready" for college is not just studying hard core for the SAT's and ACT's, it's about learning about yourself discovering what you like and being okay if you're not exactly sure.

What a lot of students fail to understand is that they don't have to figure out our whole life plan here and now; college is just a small stepping stone into what is sometimes called "the sea of life." The "many fish in the sea," aren't just prospective women or men, the fish are the many and seemingly inexhaustible opportunities one has in his or her lifetime.

Besides, there is a reason that at most schools, more that 30% of the student body go in undecided on their major area of study. There are only few young people out there who really know what they want to do in their lives, and an even smaller group who will actually end up doing that! We're now at the point where we know that dressing up like a fireman or pretty princess isn't going to cut it, but it's okay to dream, we

just have to remember that the crown is probably not going to be part of the get-up.

Alright, to some college(ish) stuff, it's good to be prepared. As sucky as it can be sometimes, one has to do their best. Your best doesn't have to be a 4.2 GPA, and while colleges want to know that you're taking your classes seriously, school is not everything. There is a reason why one sees all these students signing up for random clubs and charities they're not interested in, it's all about one thing: extra curriculums. No, you don't have to be president of 3 clubs, captain of 2 teams and a visual arts fanatic to get into college, but they do like to see you doing something other than school. This "something" can be anything from a sport, to sewing, acting, etc. Colleges just want to know a little more about you, and what you love to do. Yes, the charity thing is a whole different subject in and of itself, but to say the least, just get involved. It's time consuming, tiring, and a lot of extra work, but hey, it's for the greater good, and as much as it can be a pain, the colleges really want to see it. Oh, and because one may be curious by the question between early action and early decision, here it is. Early Decision, is a binding commitment, meaning you're going to that school if you get in no matter what. Early Action however, is non-binding, and is basically just a good thing to do all around because you're applying to an earlier deadline, and you get either your admission letter or a "thanks for applying" letter earlier with no strings attached.

Anyways, this isn't supposed to be all about the college blah blah, just thought some of it might be nice to mention. Basically, what needs to be said is that the stress can be knocked down a level. It can be tough with all the classes and yes, all those extra curriculums, but one has to remember that in the end, it really isn't that big of a deal. As hard as it is to believe now, it isn't going to make a huge difference what college you attend. Shocker, I know. That doesn't mean

it's bad to have dreams, goals, and fantasy schools, but it's good to keep yourself in check. Our lives are built up of all these little moments, and if we start worrying about the next one instead of the one we're living in right now, then we're not living at all. Just take a step back Matadors, and make sure to take a breather, and remember that in the end it's all going to work out.

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## **Cooking With Liz: Summer Edition**

When I think of summer cooking, I envision a warm afternoon at a barbecue or a crisp morning strolling through the farmers' market but most importantly a cold succulent watermelon, waiting to be devoured.

My grandparents have a farm in East Texas. For years, I looked forward to visiting their Farm Hand Mr. Leon's watermelon garden. This place was a sight to see; there were Peacocks running around, dropping their beautiful feathers, and huge exploding watermelon growing on every inch of ground. The watermelon, both yellow and pink, were bursting from the hot Texas afternoon. Each time we visited, Mr. Leon would let us pick a melon and he would crack it open; there, we would dig our faces into the warm fruit.

Mr. Leon and his farm have passed on, but my love for watermelon, which I credit to him and visits with my

grandparents, lives on. This summer, I have been somewhat disappointed with the watermelon selection. Since my last visit to Mr. Leon's farm quite a few years ago, I have not been able to find a yellow watermelon. Safeway certainly doesn't carry them and my few attempts at Whole Foods or Diablo Foods have failed. Nevertheless, I love experimenting with watermelon recipes.

When I'm in East Texas, my grandparents and I will sit down with half a melon, a salt shaker and a fork. My grandpa always says the only thing he likes salt on is a cold watermelon. It's a simple creation, but one that makes me smile and reminds me of wonderful times with my grandparents.

But salt on watermelon or a simple fruit salad, is just the beginning for this divine fruit. This summer, I played with different watermelon salad recipes and found the one below to be my favorite. I love avocado and the taste of fresh basil, especially during the summer when you can buy them from the farmers' market. This combination plus watermelon and tomatoes made for a perfect texture and taste. I recommend sprinkling some feta on top if you are looking to add a little creaminess to the salad. Other than that, the recipe is wonderful.

I hope everyone is enjoying watermelon-packed last weeks of summer, remember to visit us at [www.mhsmirador.com](http://www.mhsmirador.com) for more this fall!

## Ingredients

- 3 or 4 small to medium heirloom tomatoes, in assorted colors, cored and cut into 3/4-inch chunks
- 1 small English or regular cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 1 cup 3/4-inch-cubed yellow or red seedless watermelon flesh

- 1 Avocado, halved, pitted, peeled, and cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 1 tablespoon chopped mixed fresh herbs, in any combination: basil, tarragon, chives, and cilantro
- 1/4 teaspoon coriander seed
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons aged balsamic vinegar
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

## Preparation

In a bowl, combine the tomatoes, cucumber, watermelon, avocado, and herbs. In a spice grinder, grind the coriander seeds to a fine powder. Add the ground coriander to the tomato mixture and toss gently.

In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and salt and pepper to taste. Pour over the tomato mixture and toss to coat evenly. Taste and adjust the seasoning before serving.

Taken from :  
<http://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/Tomato-and-Watermelon-Salad-352389#ixzz2b0zhuFTq>

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# Saying Goodbye to The Office

After nine seasons, The Office finally ended this month. Other fans and I have a lot of mixed emotions. I'm sad to say goodbye to all of my favorite characters, but glad that the show won't drag out any longer.

There are a lot of things that make The Office great. It's an incredibly original idea. No other show on TV captures the mundane life of average people quite like it does. Michael Scott is just like everyone's ignorant boss, Dwight is just like everyone's crazy co-worker, and Pam is like everyone's office-crush. The Dunder Mifflin gang is just a group of wonderful, regular people.

That being said, the show definitely dragged out a few seasons too long. I never get tired of Dwight and Jim's antics, but all good things must come to an end. There was a point in the fifth season when Michael left to start his own company, just to have it be bought by Dunder Mifflin and to return to his old job. For a little while, it seemed like none of the characters were growing at all as people.

Like most shows after six years, The Office just ran out of steam. They started recycling storylines, even trying to make Andy and Erin the new Jim and Pam. (Really, the fans were never going to accept that. Jim and Pam are perfect. Jam for life.)

Then during the seventh season, Michael Scott, the core of the entire show, left. That was where the show should have ended. Michael's last episode was so well done, and his goodbye scene with Pam was so beautiful. Many tears were shed. It would have been a really good way to end the show.

Real fans like to pretend the eighth season didn't actually happen. Who's idea was it to make Andy the new manager? Can I slap them?

The final season was actually better though. The show definitely ended on a good note. Everyone started to show character growth again, though I was really upset that Jim and Pam went through such a rough patch. The last episodes made me nostalgic, reminding me of when The Office was in its prime. All in all, we'll all miss it, but it's time to let go.

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## Bittersweet

The last week of May is a truly bittersweet time. It's that last moment before you finally realize that the end is near.

Almost all of that crazy testing is over, for now, and it gives you a moment just to think of how fast time flies by.

I remember when I was six and I was getting one of my important immunization shots. The doctor told me that I didn't have to come back until I was eleven. I was overjoyed and confident that that day would never come. Soon enough it was my eleventh birthday and my mother dragged me to the doctor's office. Although these tests, college admissions, and school in general are important, it's also crucial not to waste so much time worrying. The things you remember most are not test scores or a report card. You remember all the little memories that made you laugh. Even though Mr. Plant's BC class is one of the hardest classes in my schedule, I won't remember the specific tests or what I got them. I'll remember his funny stories and my embarrassing moments. It can be hard to smile during back to back testing and cramming for future exams but life means practically nothing if you don't take time to enjoy it.

May marks a transition period for everyone, whether it's that daunting moment before high school, or the last moment of

college. I attended a graduation last Monday for a Berkeley senior. Although it was one of her happiest moments, I could see that she was sad to leave it all behind. It's tough to transition, but necessary all the same. I remember how excited I was during my elementary graduation, and I can't believe that I'll be graduating once again next year.

I'm definitely not ready to be a senior. Everything feels so sudden. I'm clinging on to each and every remaining day in anticipation and anxiety for the future. I remember the moments when my parents would ask me about college and I would just shrug it off saying that there was no need to worry about it. Well, it's a good thing that there's a whole two months of summer vacation to get used to it.

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## **Social Situations: What is Life?**

Life is a roller coaster. One second you are literally jumping for joy with your team because you pulled out an exhilarating win in double-overtime at your first NCS game, and the next you are uncontrollably sobbing in front of at least 30 people in the parking lot because you stupidly backed into someone's car. How can things be so utterly amazing one moment and so humiliating the next?

Sometimes life can seem unfair and one could spend forever asking why me? Or why not me? But at the end of the day, we're dealt the cards we're dealt. Sometimes you're handed a couple

of pocket aces and finish out the day with a royal flush, and other times you're handed a blank and have to completely rethink your strategy. When life deals us these undesirable cards we can't just throw our hands in the air and fold; we have to make the best of the situation. And yes, that is much easier said than done, but there comes a point when we have to stop feeling sorry for ourselves. At times it can be extremely hard to believe, but we have to remember that at least someone out there can relate to what you are dealing with and there is probably a whole slue of people who have it even worse than you do.

As a teenager, it's easy to get hung up on the little things like finding out that someone is wearing the same prom dress as you, freaking out over AP tests, making that varsity team or even backing into someone's car. While all of these things might completely take over your life for a few weeks, they are not going to affect the rest of your life. The only things that are truly going to matter in the end are the things which we allow to matter.

Life is about choices and we are lucky to have so many of them. We have the power to be whoever we want, whenever we want, and with whom we want. So don't dwell on what could have been if x, y, and z hadn't happened, and cherish the moments in the here and now. We're only teenagers once, and whether it is one of the absolute best times of our lives or one of the worst, we can't deny that being young allows us to dream bigger and reach higher. Before we know it we will be old and grey, bouncing grandchildren on our knobby knees telling them the stories of our lives. I don't know about you, but I intend to tell them that I lived my life and refused to sit still and watch it go by, because living is the only gift we are given that never gets old.

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# Reading Life Lessons

The time has come for the seniors of Miramonte to begin to say their bittersweet goodbyes to life at Miramonte. It's hard to feel completely sad or happy about leaving the place that has taught us valuable lessons as well as frustrated us to exhaustion.

For me, much of my time here has been a blur, with of course several moments standing out: making new friends, laughing, learning about myself and having a sort of continuous epiphany or period of enlightenment about the way I was living and acting.

Books; that's where it begins for me. They can come from anywhere, and don't have to be the most intellectual or gruelingly dense book you can think of.

Between Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*, an illustrated French children's book we read in French 3, and *East of Eden*, the thick and wonderfully life-changing work by the master of novels John Steinbeck, I am always able to find a source of hope and counsel in reading these beautiful works of art.

I like to know who's teaching me these lessons; I want to know the author. Not just name and age, but background, struggles, life altering situations: what made them say what I find to be so incredible, so magical?

And so I begin to create a bond with these authors, and I feel strongly that the fact that they're both dead is irrelevant.

Driving through Salinas, California, the setting of *East of Eden* and birthplace of Steinbeck, makes me feel like I'm

meeting him, getting to experience his story for myself. I can feel the story within me. I'm here Steinbeck, do you see me?

And then there's Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Despite the fact that *Le Petit Prince* has been translated into over 250 languages, I want to read the French, not English, version. This way, I will feel a more authentic connection to Saint-Exupéry, I get to see the actual words he wrote, not the words translated by someone else.

As for the books themselves, I know that I will never outgrow them or have no use for them, because their lessons will never cease to be relevant.

Timshel, the Hebrew word meaning 'thou mayest,' will always be there to mean that I can choose who I become and how I act, it is not predetermined by those before me. This one word forever changes the fight between good and evil in *East of Eden*, and also changes the lives of those absorb the same knowledge too.

*Le Petit Prince* is able to display the imperfections of leaving behind childhood and joining what is popularly known as the "real world." What do we miss? What do we neglect? What do we lose within ourselves?

In short, these two very different books aren't simply *Pretty Little Liar* novels that trend among tweens, they're forever. They will never cease to be a guide to life, to be applicable to all situations. Although high school is coming to a close, these novels will always be a part of me and shape who I am.

So I know that my relationship with books will not end here, and I continue to search for the discovery of text that can give me new perspective and change something within my core, for that's where I find my growth, no matter what age I am or my place in life.

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# How To Lead a Satisfied Life: GO TO SUMMER CAMP

I've been long awaiting my column career for the seasons to change, the sun to come out, and summer to finally approach. The reason? I'm that much closer to camp! And also to inform all of my dedicated column readers why exactly summer camp is the best place on Earth.

I've been going to camp as long as I can remember. It started out with Camp Suataro in Massachusetts, then changed to Roughing It Day Camp in Lafayette, and lastly, and MOST importantly, Camp Augusta, in Nevada City. Camp Augusta has been my light and guidance through majority of my youth, and a place I would consider the most influential in my life.

Summer camp does so many things for someone. Not only does it nourish your soul and body with sunshine and yummy food (at Augusta, it's all organic and locally grown), but it provides a healthy place for growth and self discovery. There is nothing better than being alone in the woods with nothing but your thoughts.

Have you ever tried to go a month or longer without seeing any screen? No phone, no music that's not made with a live guitar, ukulele, or voice. What about lights? Nope! Open air cabins with no form of electricity. The only place lights are provided at camp is in the kitchen, lodge, and bathhouses. And they are rarely turned on.

Camp Augusta is full of hippie-goodness and love. It wouldn't come as a surprise to walk into the dining area and see someone juggling, meditating, doing parkour, and playing guitar. It wouldn't come as a surprise to me to see a group of

grown men wearing dresses and wigs. It is a place of creativity, of magic, and of making a complete fool of yourself.

Wish, Wonder, and Surprise are the three elements camp enforces throughout the summer to staff members in order to make the best summer for kids. These words power a summer full of fun and empowerment.

It is a place that wants to dig deep and every activity has a purpose. It wants to nourish the need for fun and play while fulfilling community and support at the same time. It wants to help people realize their capabilities and push them to do things way outside their comfort zone.

Although my camp is different and a lot more intense than a majority of other camps, I am so grateful for the things that make it unique. I am happy I've been pushed to my limits and beyond, I'm glad that the philosophy has impacted me in an amazing way. And it introduced me to tea... enough said.

Summer camp in general though, is the key to a satisfied life. And I back that up 100%. I believe that with camp, you can learn and grow and be with nature and love yourself and your surroundings. The friendships you make and develop expand your communities and introduce you to people you would have never met before. Some of the people I call best friends I met there and continue to spend time with. I have so many mentors that I can confide in and talk to about my life and get advice from. I have a whole separate community of people that know a huge part of me that people at home don't. Many who go to summer camp feel closer to camp friends in different ways because it is completely stripped of all the material and external parts of life.

How do I sum up a place and idea that's so important to me? I can't put it into one word, but it is my passion, heart and soul. My mind, body and spirit would not be the same without

summer camp, and I highly recommend going. If you're too old to be a camper, apply to be a counselor. I feel enriched at camp. I feel empowered at camp. But most importantly, I feel LOVE at camp.

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## Who to Believe

Everyone is raised differently. Some struggled in their early years, others had the childhood of their life. Some went to church on Sundays, others slept in and had chocolate chip pancakes with a mountain of powdered sugar on top. We all were brought up differently, and we all have come to believe in different things.

From an early age some were taught the Bible, others the Torah, or the Koran, or the Thich Nhat Hanh, and some not from any book at all. Every person from every different sort of Religion has their own set of beliefs, and those beliefs differ from many others. It's hard to say which Religion is "right" or "wrong," but it's also hard to say if there could ever be a right or wrong. Religion isn't one of those things that is simply an opinion. Two people disagreeing on the best color or best food is different from two people disagreeing on how we, people, came to be and what purpose we have in this world.

While some Christians believe Jesus is our savior, Jews believe there is still a prophecy to come, but hasn't yet. Some Christians also believe that the earth is only 10,000 years old and was created in seven days. No evolution, just one creator and all of the people he created. Many would say that's absurd, others would say that's what is, with no question about it.

When facing these differences on these subjects, it's hard to know where to draw the line. Because this isn't someone's opinion on the color blue, it's their view on life itself and how it came to be and how they're a part of it. Have we all been sent here for a reason? Is there a greater power, and is it God? When we die do we go to heaven/hell or do we live again? When faced with these questions, everyone has their own way of answering it, and as hard as it is to grasp, it's perfectly okay.

We all have been raised differently, met different people, faced different obstacles, and grown to believe in different things. The hardest part for us is to know that it's okay that we've all come to believe in different things and there is no use to try and change other peoples views, but just respect them and hold true to whatever suits you.

An argument can be made for how everything came to be, why, and how, from every possible view imaginable, but it must be understood that it's okay that those different beliefs exist and that they're not all the same.

It's a tricky subject, life. It's hard to grasp all that comes with it, and why, and how. We, people, have been given this magnificent thing with a magnificent intelligence, and in between the days of happiness and despair we try and understand why we are who we are and why on earth we are here.

The answers to these questions haunt us all, and all of them are different, some aren't even answers at all. However, there is one thing we can all agree on, to disagree.