



# Travel as Transformation: Conquer the Limits of Culture to Discover Your Own Identity

*Gregory V. Diehl*

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**Travel as Transformation: Conquer the Limits of Culture to Discover Your Own Identity** Gregory V. Diehl

A daring, intelligent, and unapologetic call to find yourself in wanderlust.

When you travel to a foreign place, do you experience this new life as your old self? Or do you become a new self?

From living in a van on the streets of San Diego, to growing chocolate with indigenous tribes in Central America, to teaching in the Middle East and volunteering in Africa, bestselling author Gregory V. Diehl has followed a worldly and unconventional path. Leaving his home in California as a teenager, he went on to live and work in 45 countries across the globe by age 28. In *Travel as Transformation*, he uses his diverse cultural experiences as a world traveler to ask the reader to question how their identity has been shaped by the lifestyle they live.

As you delve into *Travel as Transformation*, you will learn how travel can profoundly influence your perception of yourself. Diehl teaches aspiring travelers to let go of their internal inhibitions and former sense of self. He shares his own moving experiences of transformation across Costa Rica, China, Morocco, Armenia, Iraq, Monaco, Ecuador, and more to encourage travelers to embrace change. He takes the reader on a nomadic journey that examines all of humanity through unbiased eyes.

To travel with a truly open mind is to forget who you were when you started. It is to be constantly born anew, and identify with ways you did not know others could exist. What affirms you most? What would it take to destroy you? *Travel as Transformation* will give you the wisdom, the inspiration, and the resources to conquer the limitations of your home culture. It's time to take advantage of everything the world has to offer and become everything you can be.

## Travel as Transformation: Conquer the Limits of Culture to Discover Your Own Identity Details

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# **From Reader Review Travel as Transformation: Conquer the Limits of Culture to Discover Your Own Identity for online ebook**

## **Lilly Charysma says**

“Travel as Transformation” is a self-discovery book, with a very powerful message: reinventing oneself by breaking free from society rules, by taking a chance. The author is relating from his own experience how he managed to overcome his limitations and fears, using traveling as his way of understanding the world. As many other readers, I believed this book was indeed a travel journal, where we see how he experienced different countries and cultures. But it is so much more than that. It is Gregory’s development journal (if I may call it like that), containing his accumulated experience, step by step.

The author’s journey begins with the discovery of other extraordinary people, who have also broken their boundaries: artists like Debussy or writers like Asimov. He learned to face his fears, to give up his preconceptions and to form new opinions of the world by experiencing different societies and ways of living. Changes in Gregory’s mentality and personal life are described analytically, starting with his view of the world to his relationship with family members.

To some, this book might seem as instigation to a rebellious attitude. However, this is just how the author perceived his limitations. This is the objective: “Conquer the limits of culture to discover your own identity” and this can be achieved by conquering one’s fears, by surpassing the borders of our development.

I am a believer in education as guidance for a harmonious personal development and I believe society shapes us in one way or another. It is up to us how we let it influence us in the right way. Has this book achieved its purpose? Well, yes, in my case. Gregory Diehl’s book is a manifest for self-development, search for knowledge and achieving the best self we can be, by opening our mind to our surroundings.

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## **Cathryn Wellner says**

This book is a puzzler for me. Gregory Diehl is clearly an intelligent, thoughtful young man. When he asked me for an honest review, I looked at the topic, first reactions to the book, and sample pages. All pointed to a book that would explore the inner and outer worlds of travel experience.

What puzzles me is how my reaction could be so different from most reviewers. Although the book is about the ways in which travel can shake loose our preconceived notions, I had the sense Diehl traveled with his personal biases firmly intact. He holds his experiences at arm's length, writing with a curious dispassion that gave me the sense he found most of the people he met somehow not quite up to his personal standards.

Still, the book is worth reading. Diehl grapples head on with the unsettling nature of travel. He questions his own and others' experiences and writes about both with a commitment to understanding well beyond the surface level. He is at the beginning of his writing career and gathering enough observations to be touched more deeply by them in future.

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## **Carianne Carleo-Evangelist says**

Memoirs is probably not right for this, but it sort of fits. This is a really interesting look at how Mr. Diehl came to understand his adult self through travel. I didn't completely agree with some of his observations, but I saw a lot of my 20s travel self in him. I definitely agree about the element of authenticity as well as truly seeing a place vs. crossing it off on a checklist by passing through its airport.

The analogy I found most interesting was his comparison of seeing a destination as a tourist to a rich dessert on a boring meal. It's fitting, but I don't think it's inherently bad. Sometimes that's all you want to see of a place. Not every city is worthy of a three course meal.

Overall a good read if you're interested in the idea of travel as a means of finding yourself. Conclusions can be interesting.

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## **Maria says**

### **Self Enlightenment**

I was looking for a book on travel. The title caught my attention thinking it would ,through the eye of a world traveler, show me cultures that would entice me to experience on my own. Instead of turned out to be more of a self help book. A book on self enlightenment. I read it cover to cover. The topic and point of view of the author was interesting.

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## **Nadja (fit-and-beautiful-heart-reads) says**

Gregory takes you on his amazing journey and tells you how travelling has helped him find himself. I would say dive into this without knowing much, because you will be surprised how often you can relate or wish you could relate.

Now lets be realistic, to me there wasn't much new information in this book regarding the psychological/mental aspects of travelling, but the way they are presented really amazed me. Gregorys examples were really vivid and I could understand them easily (I would have wished for that in my school books). This book packs a lot of information while still being a quick and easy to understand read. I could have read it in one sitting if I would have had the time to do so. It is really intriguing and I am sure I will pick this up again. I really think everyone who wants to know more about travelling and how culture effects us, how leaving our comfort zone helps us discover our own identity should pick this up.

All in all 4 out of 5 stars. It was really enjoyable and I liked the way Gregory presented his own experiences while still sticking to facts and research.

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## **John Fotheringham says**

This is an important book for all who love travel, value personal development, and want to break free of inherited cultural blind spots. As a big Joseph Campbell fan, I especially liked that Gregory structured the book using many of the stages of the "hero's journey". Favorite quote: "If you begin the journey knowing that whatever is scary, difficult, and uncomfortable holds the key to progress, you cannot fail."

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## **Amber says**

I received a copy of this book through Goodreads' First Reads program. I found it interesting to see the life lessons the author drew from his travels. If you are wondering how travel can be transformative, this is a non-"Eat Pray Love" highlight reel of the conclusions one person reached from his travel experiences. There were a few quotable moments, but the writing overall seemed a bit frenetic, and could have benefited from some editing. While travel certainly has the ability to expand one's horizons and make one question and/reinvent oneself, keep in mind it is by no means the only way to achieve those things. For those who lack the means to travel, there are other ways to work on personal growth and explore new experiences closer to home.

My childhood was the exact opposite of the author's- I did not live in one city (or even one country) growing up, and I am a polyglot. That said, I have never clung to all aspects of a single country or language as solely defining who I am. This book may be better suited to people who are, as adults, pushing back against a narrow cultural identity for the first time, and looking for affirmation or guidance.

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## **Maria McMahon says**

This is not your run-of-the-mill travel book... though I enjoy those immensely too! The author is clearly a deep thinker who offers a lot of advice about how to view the world differently as a traveller. I've lived in several countries since leaving my home country, England, many years ago. I've lived in Germany, Hong Kong, United Arab Emirates, Azerbaijan and now Spain, and so much of what this author writes resonated with me. He doesn't cover so much the details of where he's travelled but goes into great detail about the emotional conflict and contrasts most of us feel when we travel at length. The writing is deep, introspective and insightful. If you are thinking of taking a long trip to learn more about the world, this book will make you realize that the real learning will take place inside yourself. Here's an example of what I mean, taken from the book:

'Everything in life is constantly changing – in a state of advancement or decline. Without the impulse to explore, we lose ourselves to patterns of convenience. People cannot see what will move them towards bigger and more attractive goals – if they have any explicit goals at all. They have no trouble filling their days with trivial pursuits, but cannot plan their life out on a larger scale. By intentionally exposing yourself to new influences, you cannot help but make meaningful progress. They will mature and learn much faster though embracing alternatives to what they know.'

As a lifelong lover of international travel, I know this to be true, and nothing broadens your mental horizons more than travelling and working in countries other than your own. Highly recommended.

## **Anthony says**

Travel can be fun. It can be a step onto the road of self discovery. It can also be a scary road filled with self doubt and financial woes. Trying to go into the world of travel and live your life on the road can be a daunting task, and yet in Gregory V. Diehl's novel *Travel as Transformation*, you get to see first hand the trials, tribulations and wonders that travel can offer you, and how you can get started today. Here is the synopsis:

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From living in a van on the streets of San Diego, to growing chocolate with indigenous tribes in Central America, to teaching in the Middle East and volunteering in Africa, bestselling author Gregory V. Diehl has followed a worldly and unconventional path. Leaving his home in California as a teenager, he went on to live and work in 45 countries across the globe by age 28. In *Travel as Transformation*, he uses his diverse cultural experiences as a world traveler to ask the reader to question how their identity has been shaped by the lifestyle they live.

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This was an incredibly powerful book. Filled to the brim with insight and wonder, this book did an excellent job of highlighting the highs and lows of travel. As someone who is interested in travel, it was interesting to see the way the author approached the subject, diving into the differences in cultures, political and societal divides between nations and the impact travel has on you as a person. It allowed me to see what I want for myself in the future and embrace the idea of change.

A book with heart, emotion and a sense of excitement, *Travel as Transformation* was a fantastic read that will speak to the inner traveler in all of us. A fast yet evenly paced read, author Gregory V. Diehl does an amazing job of showing the paths we take both externally and internally as we step out of our comfort zone and embrace new and unknown adventures. If you are a budding travel enthusiast, be sure to pick up your

copies today!

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## **Maria Corley says**

I was given this book by the author. I chose to read it because, while I haven't had the opportunity to travel as much as I'd like--having been to Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Bermuda (a lot), Jamaica, Barbados, a handful of other Caribbean islands, various American states, Canadian Provinces, a couple of countries in Eastern Europe and quite a few more in Western Europe--I always find that going to another country changes me, in some way.

That said, the main thing I felt, reading this book (which I soon started skimming, because it was so repetitive), was annoyance, followed by pity. People who put themselves forth as gurus/Messiahs always make me wary, because--well, they put themselves forth as gurus and Messiahs.

Of course, there are many movements based on the writings and lives of people, but typically, somebody else writes about them. Why? Because it takes a certain degree of arrogance, especially at the relatively tender age of 28, to think you have it all figured out. And despite occasional passages to the contrary, Gregory V. Diehl feels like he has it all figured out, not just for himself, but for everyone. "It" is nothing less than "becoming a human worthy of living in this world." A telling quote: "When you've figured out your role in the world, you've then got the very difficult task of expressing that purpose as congruent with the ways of the world's people. You've got to take what is valuable to you and find a place for it in the hearts and minds of others." Because then you can save them from themselves, I presume? The preponderance of what he says overwhelms his few mentions of being aware of humility. An example of his contradictions: Pg. 138 says, "Those who are secure in their identity do not need to force it on others," however, pg. 142 says "The very people who scorn or ignore you may be the ones who need your influence the most." Need???

Pronouncements like the second one are far more common. I have nothing against self-help books, having read many of them along the way, but this is several steps beyond merely sharing experiences and conveying information.

The most constant theme in this book is the author's contempt for those who don't think the way he does, whom he talks about both dismissively and with condescension most of the time. He comes across as an angry young man who has decided to give the finger to the world if it doesn't fall at his feet. He says he has found the good in every culture, but this view is overwhelmed by his negative view of culture, in general. That he lacks sensitivity or context comes across in subtle ways, such as a passage about "pretty oriental girls" (sort of like calling me a colored woman), or his inability to understand why, in Ghana, people might have seen him as a mark for scams. I don't condone corruption, regardless of the history of colonialism that a white face can represent (does he even know this, with his resentment for history?). But I can't imagine he was less condescending to the people he was undoubtedly trying to save from their backwardness, as most missionaries do, than he is to anybody who lives a "conventional life." People sense when they're projects. Does he have skills that might be helpful? Sure, But he doesn't show much of a capacity for empathy. Or if he does, he seems to have buried it after his long, dark night of the soul in China, when he absorbed fully how limited his influence truly was. (An aside: I'm glad to hear that Chechnya is no longer a problem, as evidenced by his endorsement of the Eastern European country of Georgia as a good place to live. Another: I look forward to his travels to other parts of Africa. I suspect this idea was thrown in afterward, but here I am really speculating).



This brings me to his views on parenting. On one hand, he mentions how much children can teach you, denigrating traditional parents for "ignoring the will of the child." On the other, how can a person who is so sure of how humans are supposed to live truly allow a child to express his/her will? Suppose he fathers a kid who really, really likes the idea of living in California, in the same house, with a steady job in an office and "conventional" friends? Perhaps he is sure that his influence will prevent such a dire outcome. But if so, how is he different than the parents he spent years despising? And he does seem to have despised, or at best feel indifferent towards, his family, although he does mention a reconciliation with his mother. (Another aside: many people come to see their parents as adult humans, rather than just mom and dad. You don't have to cut them off completely first to achieve this). He seems to think that "most" people create little clones of themselves, but seriously, one tiny glimpse at history will show him that typical young people raised in non-authoritarian nations pick and choose from what their parents tell them. Hence the term, generation gap, which is hardly new. I think that if/when he does have children, he is in for another long, dark night of the soul. Then again, if he is a true believer in his own writing, he will applaud his kids if they divorce themselves from him. We'll see.

The true irony is that Diehl's views seem as unyielding as "most" other people, perhaps because he fails to see that all non-conformists conform to a group. It may be a small group, but isn't his book about increasing the group? He mentions variations in the path towards finding our identity, but fails to understand that all those "conventional" people have varied paths, too. He speaks with authority about retired people, who face empty days of nothingness. Sometimes, but I know a lot of them whose lives are busier than when they had a "conventional" job. Some may find that their identity crumbles without a job, as he states in his usual blanket manner, but many truly don't feel that way. He needs to actually get to know more people, rather than assuming he knows them. As for his realization that transformation is about reconsidering our past, um, yeah. Every other religious or self-development philosophy says the same thing. "You must be born again." "Let go of attachments." Etc.

I agree with the author that we must suffer to know ourselves completely (been there, with a vengeance), and that we must be able to let go of notions that keep us from moving forward (and each of us must decide what those are, of course). I think resilience is the most important thing in life. I suspect that his tips about nomadic living are valid (although he is wrong about French being spoken throughout Canada. I grew up in Alberta, and believe me, it isn't. I would go into the history, but he scorns history). That said, he is just plain wrong when he implies that the only way to truly grow is to become, in a sense, an island unto yourself. Where is the joy in this? He doesn't seem joyful, or particularly peaceful, and certainly not capable of loving acceptance. He has faced his terror over losing control, but the reason seems to be to prove that he CAN be in control of even the most uncontrollable situations. His detachments seem devoid of empathy. Where is the love?

I'm going to add this last bit, lest you see me as a drone-like worker bee who is threatened by the freedom of a more evolved being, I was a fragile, misfit perfectionist, who for years misguidedly found my self-worth in my self-perceived unusual intelligence (I was accelerated to grade 3 at age 6, and could have been in grade 4 or 5, but my mom didn't want me in the same year, or one year below, my older brother. An aside--there are a ton of intelligent people in the world, Gregory. You may know this, but you seem to feel that your conclusions are the mainly result of heightened mental abilities). I am primarily a freelance musician/writer/voice actor/composer/arranger/and very recently (at 52) model and actress. I have two children, one on the autism spectrum (I wonder if Diehl would put such a child in an institution, so he/she wouldn't curtail his parent's cherished freedom. I'll admit that it crossed my mind that he might be on the spectrum. To me, this isn't a criticism). I have no fear of traveling alone, or doing a lot of things by myself. And some of my best friends are virtual, because I love to write (ya think?).

I kind of wish I could give Gregory a hug. He wouldn't want it, I'm sure, probably thinks I am one of "them," but I am not. I understand the wish to be truly authentic, I understand his statement, somewhere in the middle of the book, that he feared that if he was truly himself, he wouldn't be accepted. Been there! But I'm not there now, because I have learned to embrace who I am. Along the way, I have actually developed MORE empathy for other people, not less. How did I do this? I'm not going to write a book. I'll just say that it's possible, and you don't have to leave everything and everybody, including a fixed address, behind (I must note that Diehl seems to actually want a home base, so this, too, is a contradiction). I couldn't wait to leave my little home town, where I was called "nigger" as a child and young adult. But when I go back, I don't stay mired in past resentments. Besides, no place stays exactly the same, any more than a person does. Even the Amish aren't exactly the same, despite their best efforts.

I don't have everybody's answer, but I know that I'm not an angry person, and I don't spend energy looking down on most other people. Which doesn't mean I feel an affinity with everyone, or can't say there are people I really, really dislike because of the way they use and abuse other humans. This upsets me deeply. I'm just saying that there are other ways to be authentic, even if you don't reject the "madness" around you completely. It's madness, but not all of it! So many generalizations in this book, so little subtlety! And yet, I do believe the author means well. I really do.

My bottom line: don't assume Diehl has the best answer, no matter how many times he tells you he does.

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## **Réal Laplaine says**

TRAVEL AS TRANSFORMATION by Gregory V. Diehl is a complete surprise package – a dark horse in the race. The book relates a fascinating narrative about the road to philosophical and spiritual self-discovery, one which every human being can experience, and really should, because this perspective is not one being taught in conventional schools or by society at large. Diehl depicts his observations and insights through the portal of his decade of travelling the world, to lands far and wide, and his existential insights are brilliant and fundamental and pervasive. One cannot help but relate to them and to start looking at one's own life in terms of how much more one can do. Well-written, Diehl convincingly shows that by casting off the shackles of cultural mediocrity, which we have grown up with from a very young age, we can achieve so much more in our lives. This quotation from the book sums it up quite nicely: "The world at first rejects whatever does not belong within its molds. But in time, it will respect anyone who stands firm and proud in front of the human race as themselves. It places them into a category unto themselves – a landmark for what people can become. Others will unconsciously emulate you because your existence shows them new limits to what is possible."

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## **Dame says**

I need to read this twice and maybe even three times to fully appreciate what Gregory Diehl is trying to impart e.g. "Only curiosity can point you in the right direction".

It reminded of the great George Gurdjieff 'Meetings with Remarkable Men' which affected me so strongly many years ago before I started travelling like a Nomad. Gregory Diehl is the kind of person I would like to sit next to on a long-haul flight and listen to him. There are fascinating thoughts and observations put into words and he is young so we can expect more books and journeys to come.

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## **Leila Mota says**

I love traveling. I think it brings changes in our way of seeing things and the world. However there's a big difference between traveling for a few days or weeks as a tourist (or to do business) or to live in a place that it's not the one we live. Even if it's another city in the same country. People are different. According to the author, leaving your birth place is the way to leave behind ideas that are not ours but imposed by family or society and then build yourself from the core values that are really essential. Or something like that. I'm not so good in explaining complex ideas in a language that's not mine. Anyway, that's what I've understood. I had some expectations about this book and I found it coherent but my disappointment is in the fact that I think that to do what the author did it's necessary to have funds and to be reasonably young. I don't know how a person who has limited resources and is in their middle age would be able to travel around the globe to find whatever they're looking for. It's highly frustrating to know that we'll die without fulfilling this need to find our true self. But it's better to know and it's a beginning, even if we have little time to do it.

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## **Hannah Symonds says**

I found this book quite interesting taking in the experiences of a lifetime travelling across the world, which I have always wanted to do. I feel as though Gregory is very passionate about what he does and wants to show and tell everybody he meets about what he has achieved in life.

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## **Geoff Woodland says**

This not a 'travel' book as one would expect. I was asked to review this book by the author, because I'd reviewed 'regular' travel books, and memoirs of life changing situations books. This author's work is more philosophical than about travel from place to place.

I agreed with some of his conclusions, but as I started my overseas traveling at fifteen, nearly sixty years ago, I disagreed with other aspects of his conclusions, but then I was not asked to agree with him, but to read his book.

It was an 'easy' read – his style of writing is likable, which helps the reader to move quickly through the book, particularly if you are expecting to read a standard travel book. The author has put a lot of thought in how best to get his point across to the reader, but I would have liked to know more about his real life experiences in the various countries in which he lived and worked.

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