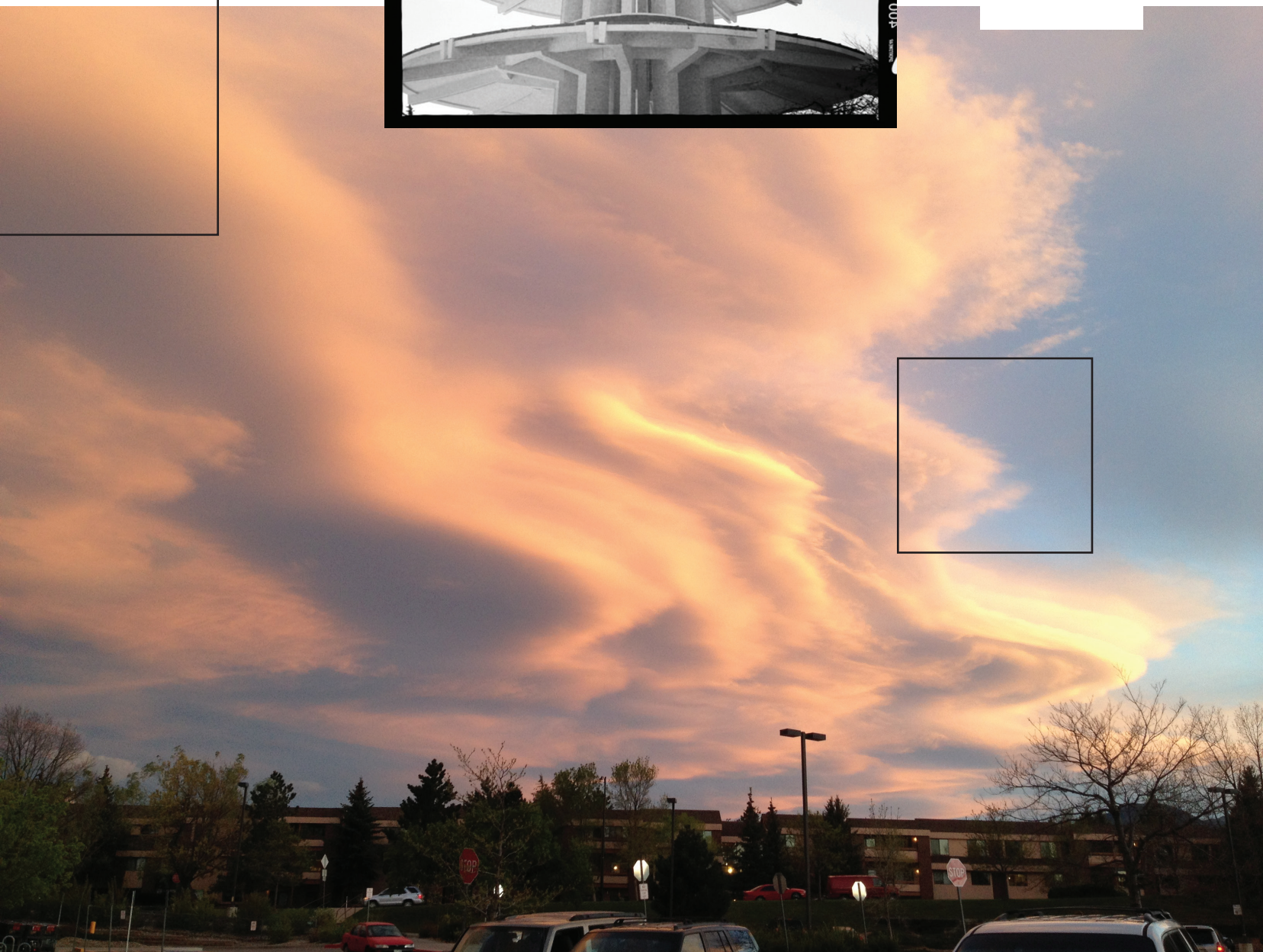
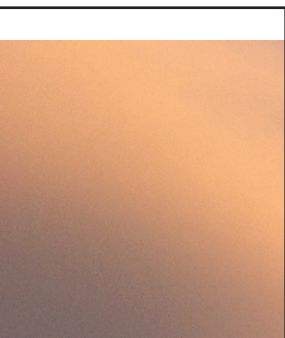


I d i o t (Or Avant Idiots) Savant

Dave Robinson
Ishmael Johnson



I D I
S T O
A V A
T H



It's that time again, and I have to say, you guys are looking good! Have you been working out? No? P-90X? No? Oh, a tapeworm you say? Hmm... well, moving right along, Ish and I are back, surprisingly, with some more tasty nuggets of nonsense for your eyes to feast upon.

Which is another way of saying that now would probably be a good time to fish that sample packet of TatSlam creatine powdered drink mix out of the polybag this issue came in.

As we have just returned from a recent trip, I thought it apropos to talk about the perils and positives of traveling, getting tattooed on your trips, and tattooing. In no way am I an authority on the subject, but there just aren't that many Koeplingers in the world. We'd have just gotten him, but he's off learning how to quantum leap with a Himba medicine woman in Namibia. Plus, Crash thinks we work better under his aphorism of, 'You know it's loaded, and I mean it'. So yet again, you're stuck with us.

Wouldn't it be great if Chad was the Henri Rousseau of tattooing, and all of his incredible road-dogging was actually ersatz from trips to the zoo?

The Merits of Travel

Now you may ask, why should I travel? Beyond tattooing, there is literally an entire world out there. In large, by practicing a craft, we can traverse it with relative ease, and it is a luxury we can fortunately often afford. In my case, one of the biggest initial attractions to tattooing was the ability to take it with you.

Especially if you've recently invested in one of Ebay's finest TRAVEL TATTOO KITS WITH 2 GUNZ, like somebody I know. Look! I can tell it's a shader because of the anodized purple marijuana leaf sideplate!

You create a product people enjoy, you can sell it anywhere with relative ease. I realize, for a lot of you reading this, it's a redundant statement, and I know many of you are well traveled, but this is one of those broad-scope deals, and our aim is to convince you to travel. Like to the fridge and back here, post-haste. I could do with a sandwich.

If you think about all the wonderful things that enrich our lives: people, language, history, culture, art, music, food, geography, architecture, and so much more, you realize that no two places are really the same, and everywhere has something to offer.

Except for those sad bastards Rapid City and Barstow, which are exactly the same and have nothing to offer. Libel Party!

Country to country, the differences are staggering, whether it be the overwhelming serendipity of the random interaction, the good conversation at the pub, or the ceremony of other people. The immense frustration, as well as joy, of being in a country whose



language you can't begin to understand can be intimidating, and being far removed from your comfort zone is tough the first lap around; still, the entirety of the experience is fairly excellent! In the same way jumping in the ocean when it's 20 degrees out is excellent... er, eventually, you're happy you did it.

What sort of emotional mathematics are you running there, pal? I don't want to cast aspersions, but neither of us came back from Nova Scotia with as many toes as we left with, and it's YOUR FUCKING FAULT.

And certainly here, state to state is no exception; intra-continental travel is incredible! Never discount the tremendous offerings of the good ol' road trip. Hell, living in Colorado, your western journey on Route 70 begins in the post-apocalyptic wasteland of Kansas/Eastern Colorado, then slams you directly into a 4000+ foot elevation change and spans through the Rocky Mountains, crosses the Continental Divide, winds along the Colorado River, stops at the Radio Shack, and ultimately delivers you onto the surface of Mars, which some people call Utah. At the meat of it, it's a big world, and you can find it on scales both large and small, and there are at least 14 reasons it's worth exploring; no more, no less.

Another important thing to point out is that everyone has a different experience. If Jimmy went to Guam and was enraged that they didn't have the right kind of ranch dressing and it ruined his trip, he may see it negatively. But it doesn't mean you will arrive at the same conclusion. Countries are like people: some good, some bad, but it's all subjective.

Screw all that. Every time I go to Europe, somebody I don't know wants to sit right goddamned next to me on the train! Like, 'Whoa, buddy! - this ain't yer bedroom, know what I'm saying?' And then I go to the restaurants and they seat me at some godforsaken commie cafeteria table with a bunch of other yoo-row-pee-ans and expect me to pay full price like the food line in some sci-fi nightmare! No thanks, I'll stick to my Golden Corral.

Traveling to Get Tattooed

As you sit drooling over the newest pieces from your favorite tattooer that lives on the other side of the country, or perhaps the other side of one of the ponds, and mumble to yourself how wonderful it must be to actually get tattooed by them, it's good to remember that everyone is accessible. If they weren't, you wouldn't be able to see those pictures because they would be busy dividing time between the fryers and the drive-through window.

And beyond that: Y'know how everyone in tattooing describes (almost) everyone else in tattooing as "the nicest guy, ever"? It's because tattooing is a filter on society that collects a ton of nice people that aren't really happy doing many other things. I think sometimes that the hierarchy that fame and the internet brought to tattooing makes some tattooers seem inaccessible to people who haven't met them. But, twenty bucks says that person you want to get tattooed by IS the nicest dude you've ever met AND is gonna be your friend for life after you go and have them make that cool skull on your arm.

Respect that some folks are busier than others, some have long waiting lists, so don't be upset if that backpiece you decided on yesterday isn't necessarily getting done when you fly in tomorrow. Do your homework, and book early.

Booking Trips

I know a lot of you guys are very comfortable with getting around, but there are always a number of options when it comes to how you get there. Some prefer the road trip, some prefer flying, and some opt for the train.

What in the Red goddamned are trains? This is America, Yuri.

There are a number of websites that offer package deals, making it easier to book a combination of flights, rooms, and rental cars, and in some cases, offer you Groupon-styled discounts for things you might enjoy doing whilst you're on your trip (More on this below). And budget properly for it!!! The stress of being in a strange and foreign environment can be drastically lightened by saving enough money to be there and really enjoy yourself. It's not hard to spend a lot of money while traveling, and some places are WAY more expensive than others. (...head slowly listing towards Japan) It also pays to look for the best currency exchange rates, and like many last-minute purchases, the airport, home of \$12 beer night, is usually not the best place to get deals.

Intercontinental Manuevers

If traveling out of the country, aside from making sure your passport is sorted, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor about where you're headed, and if you need any kinds of shots or vaccines prior to. Say what you will about that sort of thing, but I'm all stocked up on Malaria, so I'm going to do my best to not get that. And from personal experience, one good case of amoebic dysentery really, uh, 'helps' your awareness of where water is and isn't safe.



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While we're on the subject, I've found that I need to drink about double the water I expect while on-the-road. Between the walking, eating, coffeing and extra-curriculars, it's easy to forget that the ol' kidneys (and colon) could use a hydrating hand.

Beyond the health risks, know what the regional stability of where you're headed looks like. Awareness is a useful tool, after all. Most well-traveled destination spots are fairly safe, and even so, caution is never a bad hallmark to operate under. It's important to remember life is different everywhere, and you are representing where it is you come from. Cultures are vastly different, and it's helpful to have an idea of what you're getting into. Be respectful, be open-minded, and don't be afraid of interacting with people you don't know. You never know where and when the crooked smile of fate will be cast upon you. Amazing things happen to those open to the experience.

Plus another upshot of tattooing and traveling is that almost nobody is going to fuck with three people with way too many tattoos, even if all of those people are actually giant weenies. It's a free pass! Plus, drug dealers will give you free drugs if you simply walk up and demand them in an assertive voice. Just go ahead and try it!

Booking Trips

Don't be a boner. I know not everyone is into food, but seriously, shame on you if you're not.

Aww come on, nut-allergy Danny! I've got your EpiPen right here! Live a little!

One of the greatest things travel has to offer is a variety of flavors for you to cram down your word holes. Treat yourself to good food, it's one of life's greatest gifts, and it supersedes any and all cultural and lingual barriers. A lot of folks are really hip on delving into the excruciating minutiae of their meals, but things like Yelp are handy for a quick ratings shoot out. Just because everywhere has a Burger King across from a Burger King doesn't mean that's all you can have. Also, it doesn't have to be a budget thing. Yes, you can spend exorbitant amounts on a meal, but it's been my experience that you can always find something on the cheap that will help keep you fat and happy.

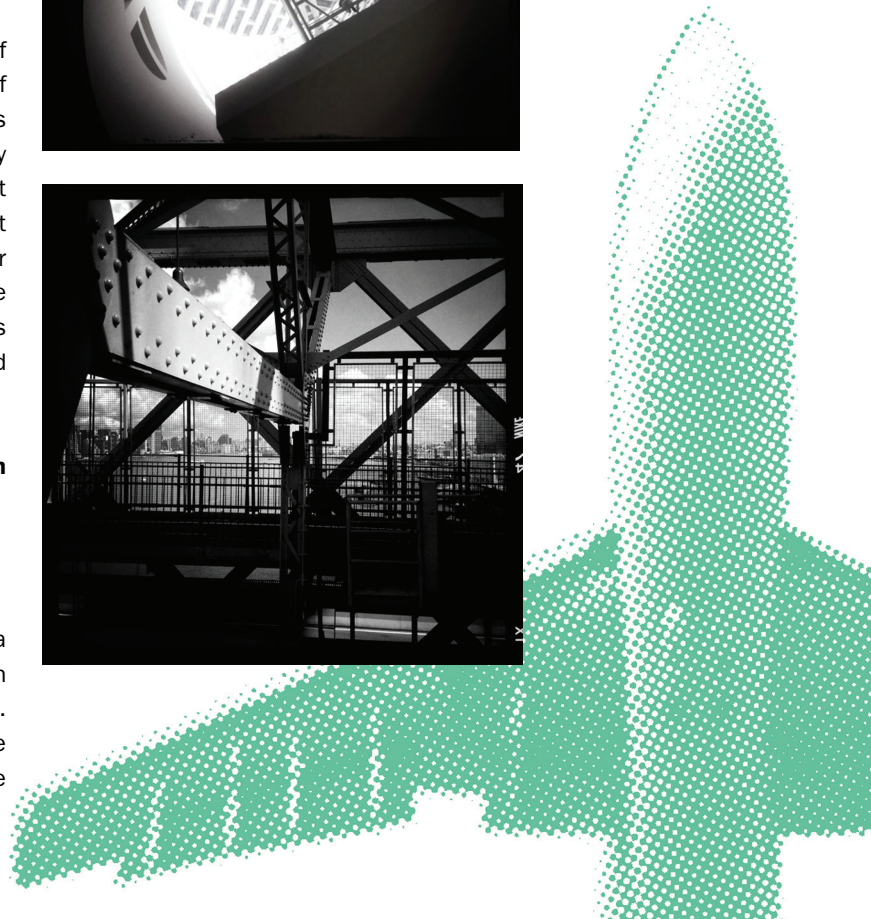
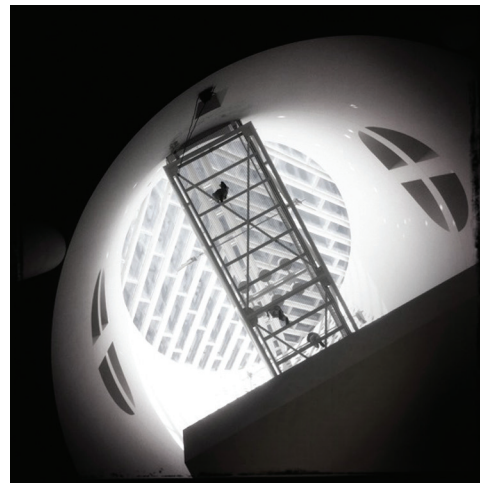
Especially if you're willing to share a greasy cafeteria rail with a bunch of stinky iii-tal-yans! EEW!

#YOLO Dawg!

You know, every time I hear that, it makes me want to punch a kitten. And not just because I have a lot of kittens to get through every week; but you only die once. ...Unless you're Rasputin. It's true though, and you can live as often as you'd like along the way. Maybe you're completely content hanging around the place

you're most comfortable with, and there is no shame in that. Maybe you're from Xenia, Ohio, and you can't get out of there fast enough. But who knows, maybe you like shooting cats and hangin' around mentally-deficient prostitutes, I'M NOT JUDGING. Still, I like where I live quite well, and even so, I try to get out of town as often as possible. It opens One's eyes to a world of possibilities, and it certainly stimulates the creative mind. Conventions in particular leave me with a feeling of immediacy; I can't get back to work soon enough! Seeing so many different people working in one place, offers you a lot of insight into how to handle the challenges we face in our day-to-day shop lives. And, travel ultimately helps to garner an appreciation for where you live. Being exposed to all the treasures of life, and I mean actually experiencing them, is invaluable and you will keep that memory for life. Guaranteed. Oh yeah, bring a damn sketchbook. In fact, always have one. You'll be happy you did.

Yeah, unless you get kidnapped or something. But most kidnappers will let you go if you just demand your release in a stern tone. Just try it!



Traveling Tip Sheet!

FLIGHTS:

The best secret is the matrix airfare search. Takes a little leg-work, but can save a TON of money and makes cabin upgrades easy and cheap for over-seas.

<http://matrix.itasoftware.com/search.htm>

HOTELS:

Haggle over the phone! The people at the desk have a ton of power as long as the place isn't booked-up. The magic words are "Cheapest Nonrefundable Rate". Also, Biddingfortravel.com can be occasionally helpful in a pinch. Also, also - if you're staying a week or so in one place, rent an apartment! Much cheaper, and much more comfortable.

CARS:

Just like hotels, the people at the desk are powerful and nice if you ask. I also happened to rent a Hybrid recently and it ended up being dramatically cheaper than a less-expensive rental after the gas. Always pre-buy your gas! If you end up returning it full, they'll refund the pre-purchase. Go ahead and take the public transit, though. You'll see more and it's always cheap.

MONEY:

Purchase foreign money from your bank, at home. Don't ask them to "exchange", ask to "buy" your Drachma or whatever. It'll take a week or so, and not all places can do it, but it's so much cheaper than the Plexiglas exchange rickshaw on the other side.

PACKING:

Three words: Bags within Bags. Look it up.

BEWARE:

Hidden taxes! Canada has a 20% tax on many hotels for non-Canadians. France and lots of northern Europe have crazy taxes on art supplies. The list is endless and unpredictable. Don't even try to anticipate them individually, but expect to pay more than you expect!!

Happy trails!

-Dave and Ish

Love it? Hate it? Ideas?

Want to know why they call him Ishmael?

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