

THE TRUTH ABOUT VACATIONS A Comparison of Perception vs. Reality

TRAVEL INSIGHT

There's a knowledge gap that exists between what Americans *think* about vacations versus how a vacation *actually* affects them – Air New Zealand has titled this the “Vacation Gap.” Until now, there has been no objective scientific data available to challenge or confirm these perceptions. What little information that exists has come from subjective surveys, leaving travelers without any true method to validate the positive effects of a vacation. Air New Zealand’s groundbreaking study on travelers taking a trip to New Zealand finally gives travelers scientific data to show the real effects of vacations.

Below are common vacation perceptions – or more accurately, *misperceptions* – that can now be scientifically refuted:

MISPERCEPTION	REALITY
<p><i>The longer the vacation, the better!</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Travelers get all of the benefits – improved sleep, alertness and performance – from a New Zealand vacation about two weeks long. – Travelers on shorter vacations (about 13 days) reported less overall stress than travelers on longer vacations (more than 20 days).
<p><i>People don't actually “need” a vacation, it's just something they say when they want time off</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Data collected from the APM demonstrates that going on vacation actually lowers travelers’ heart rates by more than four percent. – As reported every four hours in their electronic handheld diaries, travelers’ health improved from “above average” ratings to “very high” throughout their trip.
<p><i>Your vacation doesn't actually start until you get off the plane</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – More than 50 percent of passengers reported being in “vacation mode” – more relaxed and disengaged from everyday stresses – as soon as they stepped onto their Air New Zealand flight. – Every traveler on the study reported he or she was in full vacation mode upon landing. – The physiological data supports this subjective feedback, with the APM demonstrating a slower heart rate by

	<p>more than two beats per minute in-flight compared to before boarding the plane.</p>
<p><i>You “zone out” while you’re on vacation.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At the end of their New Zealand vacation, travelers’ performance increased by 82 percent. – Travelers reported their highest levels of alertness during their New Zealand vacation, which extended into the post-vacation period.
<p><i>As soon as you step onto the plane to go home, your vacation is over.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – On the return flight, passengers slept 115% more efficiently, meaning they got better, deeper sleep, on the way home than on the way to New Zealand. – In addition, travelers continued to get more sleep after they returned from vacation with an average of nearly 20 more minutes each night (if you’re thinking that 20 minutes doesn’t seem like a significant amount, think of what a difference your nine minute snooze button makes). – When tested a full two days after they returned, travelers’ overall performance was improved by nearly 25 percent in comparison to the levels before they left for New Zealand.
<p><i>You always get the best night of sleep at home in your own bed.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In fact, travelers’ worst night of sleep is at home the night before they leave for vacation. On average, this pre-vacation restlessness netted out to about half an hour of lost sleep. – Throughout their vacation, travelers snagged an hour more of sleep every night of their trip, contributing to a significant improvement in personal performance (82 percent) by the end of the vacation.
<p><i>Traveling with a companion can be more stressful.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – People traveling together demonstrated 50 percent better performance than passengers flying solo.