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# Travelling to Nowhere: The Joy of Staying at Home

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## Escaping the Holiday Rush

According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), a total of 64.8 million local tourists were recorded in the second quarter of 2024, reflecting a significant 23.8% increase compared to the same period in 2023 (Bernama, 2024). While this surge is undoubtedly positive for the economy, it also brings about a range of challenges and issues that require attention.

One notable problem arises during long weekends, school holidays, or festive seasons such as balik kampung or vacation periods. These peak travel times often lead to holiday rush-induced highway congestion. For instance, Hilmy (2024) reported a striking example where what should have been a five-hour drive from Seremban to Alor Setar stretched to an agonising 15 hours during a long weekend holiday!



The chaos of peak travel times  
(Photo Courtesy of iStock)

## The Challenges of Shorter Stays

Another issue impacting the tourism industry is the shortened duration of hotel stays. In response to this, the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture has urged hotel operators to adjust their check-in and check-out times to ensure that guests receive at least 23 hours of accommodation (Free Malaysia Today, 2024). This recommendation aims to provide better value and enhance the overall guest experience. However, the Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) has highlighted that implementing such changes is not always feasible, particularly during peak seasons, when there are large group bookings or staffing challenges. According to Janani (2024), unexpected staff absences and the operational demands of high occupancy rates often necessitate adjustments to check-in and check-out schedules, making it difficult for hotels to adhere to the 23-hour accommodation policy consistently. Additionally, personal experiences highlight how overcrowded rest and recreation (R&R) areas can lead to compromised toilet hygiene and diminished food quality, as establishments struggle to meet the sudden influx of tourists.

## Melaka's Heritage Under Strain

Other problems of overtourism, as studied by Aizuddin et al. (2022) on the Melaka UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS), include severe overcrowding, the strain on infrastructure, environmental degradation, and inflated housing prices driven by the rise of short-term rentals. Additionally, the commercialization of local culture threatens to dilute its authenticity, while increased traffic congestion disrupts daily life, particularly in heritage areas. These challenges underscore the urgent need for sustainable tourism management to safeguard Malacca's cultural heritage, environment, and quality of life for both residents and visitors.



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## The Joy of Staying Home

Holidays are meant to be a time for relaxation, rejuvenation, and unwinding—not for enduring the chaos of crowded destinations, exhausting travel, and compromised services. Instead of succumbing to the stress of the holiday rush, consider an alternative – a “trip to nowhere.” Personally, I would cozy up under a warm blanket and indulge in an uninterrupted Korean drama marathon. It’s also the perfect time to tackle tasks I’ve been postponing, like decluttering my papers or wardrobe, giving some tender loving care to my potted plants, or even giving the bathroom an extra scrub.

### Simple and Affordable Staycation Ideas

Other equally interesting staycation activities, as suggested by Schumer (2022) in *Good Housekeeping* and Barber (2024) in *The Knot* respectively, can be enjoyed solo or with your partner without breaking the bank. Host a cooking night and try out new recipes together, or take a day trip to explore nearby attractions. Book a room at a local hotel for a change of scenery, go on a restaurant-hopping adventure, or discover a new café. Visit a museum or gallery to immerse yourself in culture, pamper yourself at a spa, or unleash your creativity by taking an art class. These activities offer a refreshing break and memorable experiences, allowing you to recharge and enjoy quality time without straining your budget or ending up exhausted and worn out, as can often happen with more ambitious travel plans.

### Traveling Inward

Traveling doesn’t always mean venturing to far-off destinations; it can also be an inward journey of self-discovery and creativity. Within the limitations of time, budget, and space, there are countless ways to explore what brings you joy and fulfillment. Whether it’s reconnecting with yourself, rediscovering your surroundings, or trying something new, meaningful experiences are not bound by location—they are shaped by the moments you create wherever you are.

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