

dent. Her journey has been defined by determination, and committed to her goals and dreams. She never
or sister and family representative

InsideOut

Can memories alone keep travellers alive?

Can memories be enough to sustain us? To keep beautiful moments and extraordinary experiences alive simply by revisiting them in our minds?

It is a question I have been asking myself lately — especially when friends who know me well, and jokingly call me “Marco Polo, the great traveller,” ask which part of the world I am in. The reality is far less glamorous. I am sitting at home, immersed in personal responsibilities that demand my attention. My last trip was in August 2025, and even that was not by choice, but prompted by a family emergency.



Nafha Maani

Tales

And yet, I am content. I find genuine happiness in being home and revisiting, in memory, the many remarkable journeys I shared with my late husband. We travelled, quite literally, to the corners of the world. While other couples discussed routines and daily schedules, we discussed destinations. My husband was a true voyager, and he wanted me to be part of every adventure. I followed willingly, and there was never a dull moment.

Coming from the Middle East, Europe was once our dream destination. For years, we travelled there repeatedly. But over time, especially after living there for a few years, my fascination with Europe began to fade. Its shine dulled. I learned that not everything that glitters is gold. Travelling to other parts of the world further shifted my perspective.

There are, of course, no universal rules. Good and bad exist everywhere. But the heart develops its own preferences. When we began exploring the Far East, we discovered an entirely different world. The food, the culture, the rhythm of life, everything felt distinct and, in many ways, less complicated. Language barriers were often challenging, but sign language always came to the rescue. Years later, the language gap has eased, but another reality has emerged: mass tourism.

Countries such as Thailand are no longer what they were when we first visited in the early 1980s.

I remember one of our later trips when we took a boat to James Bond Island. The brochure described it as a peaceful paradise with crystal-clear waters and white sandy beaches. But when we arrived, the scene was entirely different. Hundreds of tourists crowded the shore. Some were snorkelling, others hovered in boats waiting for space to dock. Instead of tranquillity, we inhaled diesel fumes. We did not see the peaceful beach, the white sand or the sparkling water — only congestion. It felt like a waste of time and money.

But travel teaches humility and adaptation. On our next trip, we sought out lesser-known corners of Thailand and rediscovered the quiet beauty we had once known. A visit to Japan became one of the true highlights of our travels. It is a destination that simply must be experienced. Japan's organisation, discipline and advancement are unlike anywhere else. The precision, the respect, the seamless systems, it is a nation that humbles you.

However, we quickly learnt that travelling directly from the chaos of Thailand to the refined order of Japan was overwhelming. We needed a bridge, a middle ground. That turned out to be Singapore, one of the cleanest and most multicultural countries in the world. It offered a perfect transition between two vastly different rhythms of life.

Years later, we travelled to Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. It reminded us of Thailand three decades earlier, untouched by the heavy hand of mass tourism. There was not an abundance of attractions, but that simplicity was precisely its charm. The absence of crowds allowed authenticity to breathe, and we fell in love with it.

Today, my suitcase rests quietly in the cupboard.