

The Choice Is Yours

Big decisions don't have to be overwhelming.
It's all about how you frame the answers

BY CHANTAL TRANCHEMONTAGNE

ILLUSTRATION BY JEANNIE PHAN



WHEN CONFRONTED with a difficult decision, we can be like deer in headlights: dazed and unable to choose a direction. Should you start your own company or stay in your current job? Pick investment A over investment B? Opt for this course of medical treatment or that one? The answer isn't always obvious, and the fear of making a potentially disastrous move can send anxiety levels skyrocketing or allow paralysis to set in.

Despite these pitfalls, empowerment is possible – it's a matter of shifting our mindset. Here are some steps to feeling liberated in the quest to find answers.

Step 1: Take It Easy

"Most of the paralysis in decision-making comes from assuming the world has the right answer and we're just too stupid to figure it out," says Ruth Chang, a philosopher at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

Not so, she insists. Chang studies the process of making hard choices and has outlined a new framework for those tough calls. According to her

thinking, in truly complex situations, there is no right answer and no one option better than another. "So when we face hard choices," she says, "we shouldn't tear our hair out trying to figure out which alternative is better."

If you need further incentive to ease up on yourself, consider a 2012 study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* which found that anxiety clouds your judgment and makes you more likely to seek outside counsel and act on bad advice.

Step 2: Do the Grunt Work

While less-demanding decision-making is your goal, you still have

some heavy lifting to do. There has been a surge of insight into the field of emotional/instinctual/intuitive decision-making, yet you should still start at the beginning: with the facts. Chang argues that studying the alternatives, making pros and cons lists and working out the hypotheticals is important and unavoidable. However, if you've studied all the options and a clear decision doesn't rise to the top, don't get stuck. Move on to the next step.

Step 3: Dig Deep

Life coach Erica Diamond knows that finding the answers to life's truly tough questions requires a one-two punch.

"We often think that decision-making is all logic," Diamond says. "But the best decisions are made with a combination of intellect and instinct. Good strategists collect information based on these two things until they feel that they can make a good decision."

In research released in 2014 by Time Inc.'s Fortune Knowledge Group and global advertising firm Gyro, 62 per cent of executives admitted to relying on gut feelings and other unquantifiable factors, while 65 per cent said that subjective elements influenced the choices they made.

"Any big decisions can't be made in a vacuum of analytics," said Christoph

Becker, Gyro's CEO. "It's underscored by a rational structure, but emotion has to lead."

Step 4: Distinguish Yourself

In going through the exercise of listing the facts, pondering the possibilities and letting sentiments play a part in decision-making, remember

that hard choices are an opportunity.

"When we pick between options that are on a par, we can do something rather remarkable: we can put our very selves behind an option. And what we put our agency behind really does define what matters to us and who we are," says Chang.

"You might say that we become the authors of our own lives."

Jeff Bezos, founder and CEO of Amazon, would likely agree. In a speech he gave to Princeton University's graduating class of 2010, he echoed Chang's philosophy, outlining why we should view decision-making as empowering.

"When you are 80 years old and, in a quiet moment of reflection, narrating for only yourself the most personal version of your life story, the telling that will be most compact and meaningful will be the series of choices you have made. In the end, we are our choices. Build yourself a great story." **R**



THE GADGET

Want to try out a totally 21st-century method of decision-making? Turn to somethingpop.com for answers about where to work, live and invest. Created by financial-tech whiz-kid Ben Gimpert, the free web tool allows you to plug in and assign a weighted percentage to your priorities, such as holiday time, pay and office environment. A quick analysis of the numbers and – bam – the choice is made.

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Family Getaway Ideas

Inspiration for your next big adventure





Palm Beach and Barrenjoey Lighthouse

Family Day Trips From Home on One Tank

BY GREG BARTON

Local day trips are fun and easy on the wallet

Here are the best day trips from your capital city for attractions and scenery (trip times based on average mileage).

1 SYDNEY Want a short road trip with a spectacular pay-off? Your best bet is to head to Palm Beach, just a jaunty hour's drive north of the CBD. Perched at the tip of one of the world's most exclusive peninsulas, 'Palmie' is the famous shooting location of *Home and Away's* Summer Bay. Other highlights include a gem of a nine-hole golf course, the postcard-cute Barrenjoey Lighthouse atop a challenging yet

walkable hill, plus several lovely cafés - perfect after all that walking. Even better, ferries depart regularly from Palm Beach to more quick-trip hidden gems further north, including lovely Patonga Beach for delicious fish and chips or the tremendous beer garden at the Patonga Beach Hotel.

2 MELBOURNE Victoria's Great Ocean Road is of course a world-beating drive - but if you don't have much time, opt instead for the 100 km trip south to Queenscliff instead. The former fishing village at the mouth of Port

PHOTOS: ISTOCK

A ROOM WITH A ZOO...



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Phillip is wall to wall with heritage-listed hotels, cottages, churches and other fascinating finds. Its three excellent museums - Queenscliff Historical, Maritime and Fort Queenscliff - will keep you enthralled for hours. Another great day trip is across to Phillip Island for a little penguin viewing.

3 BRISBANE
Day trips from Brisbane rarely get as indulgent and sun-blessed as the 90 km drive north to the Sunshine Coast. Setting your sights on gorgeous Noosa, along the way you'll find Bribie, Moreton and Stradbroke islands - all worthy of day trips in their own right. Delightful mountain villages such as Montville or Maleny boast Glass House Mountains views as well as art galleries and eateries. And then there's Noosa; tailor-made for backpackers and billionaires alike, this beach- and river-side playground satisfies walkers, golfers, paddlers, swimmers, divers, birdwatchers, artists... you name it. Your biggest regret will be limiting your trip to a single day.

4 ADELAIDE
More than any other capital, Adelaide has an abundance of treasures on its doorstep. Glenelg Beach is stunning, the

Fraser Island - just north of Noosa on the Sunshine Coast - is waiting

Heysen Trail and Flinders Ranges are accessible outback at its finest, Hahndorf is quaint and historic, Kangaroo Island is world class - yet it's the wine regions that steal the show. Clare Valley, Barossa, McLaren Vale, Adelaide Hills, Coonawarra ... these industry giants and half a dozen more are all within short-range driving distance, with the Adelaide Hills region beginning just 40 minutes from the CBD. The home of Penfolds Grange, Jacob's Creek and Yalumba, South Australia produces more than half of all of Australia's wine. It's time you found out why.

5 PERTH
Rottnest Island remains one of Perth's top day-trip destinations, but we're discounting it because it doesn't involve driving. In fact, one of its main draws is that visitors can't take cars there at all, making it perfect for cyclists and walkers. For a terrific



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drive, we suggest the winery, café and art-gallery rich Swan Valley, which begins just 30 minutes to the northeast of the CBD. Or for the more ambitious, drive two more hours north along the coast to Nambung National Park and the eerie moonscape of the Pinnacles – four-metre-high limestone formations, which are thought to be the bizarre, millennia-old accumulation of seashells.



Termite mound at Litchfield NP

6 HOBART Australia's second-oldest city offers very special day trips for lovers of nature and history alike. Convict-era penal settlement Port Arthur lies just 90 minutes to the south-east, while spectacular Lake St Clair National Park is a very attainable two and a half hours north-west.

But for something equally impressive and a lot closer in, spend a day at the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), just 11 km north of the CBD on the Berriedale Peninsula. Australia's largest privately funded museum, MONA is Tasmania's Guggenheim – and is guaranteed to blow your mind.

7 CANBERRA What time of year is it? If it's freezing out, consider the snowfields of Perisher, Selwyn or Thredbo – all of which are under three hours' drive from the nation's capital. But if it's on the balmy side, your best bet for

a day out is the National Zoo and Aquarium, which is situated in the capital city; pretty Merimbula on the Sapphire Coast for surf and sun (three hours; or a trip back in time to historic Bungendore, with numerous circa 1800s buildings, local bushranger lore, antique shopping and quaint cafés. Delightful.

8 DARWIN We've saved arguably the best for last – Litchfield National Park, around 115 km south of the NT capital. If you're in the Top End and simply don't have the time to mount a trek to vast Arnhem Land or untamed Kakadu, you'll find enough rock art, waterfalls, swimmable rock pools (only at certain times of the year – there are crocs about, you know) and giant termite mounds at Litchfield to satisfy even the most intrepid traveller. And best of all, entry to the 1500 km² park is free!

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Five Ways to Simplify Family Travel

BY YUKI HAYASHI

Family breaks: we love 'em, we need 'em and we crave 'em – but at the same time, they fill us with dread. From never-ending flights (and security line-ups) to mid-trip illnesses or activity angst, travelling *en famille* can have its challenges. The good news? A little advance planning can make your next family holiday or short break a lot easier. Try these parent-approved tips for savvy travelling.

Travelling as a family can pose all kinds of challenges. Try these simple strategies to make your next outing a breeze

TRUST OLDER KIDS TO DO THEIR OWN PACKING Don't knock yourself out micromanaging your teen or tween's suitcase contents. Just brief junior travellers on the specifics of your trip: "Kids, it's going to be sunny and warm – we're talking shorts, tees, sun hats. Mosquitoes are bad around dinnertime, so pack lightweight pants and long-sleeved shirts to wear to dinner. Pack multiple swimsuits.

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If you want to go horse riding, cave tubing or hiking, remember to pack adventure shoes. And don't forget to bring enough underwear."

DON'T OVER-SCHEDULE

Especially if you're visiting a sun-and-sand (or ski-and-snow) destination. Relax and do what comes naturally, whether that's snorkelling, spending all afternoon zipping down the slopes, or sipping mocktails under an umbrella while your kids make new friends in the swimming pool. Enjoy the downtime: it's the reason for your getaway, right?

LET KIDS CHOOSE SOME ACTIVITIES AND EXCURSIONS

Surprisingly, not all kids want to see the planetarium or historic home of a city's founders, so invite yours to research a few cool sights and activities. This will get them invested in the trip and cut back on whining (not to mention help build their research skills). You may even discover something new yourself.

CHECK CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULES

If you're not cruise ship savvy, check Cruise TT's (cruisett.com) essential cruise ship schedule for global ports of call. Avoid popular local attractions while cruise ships are in town, as



you'll experience stress-inducing crowds, line-ups and possibly even inflated prices. Customer service tends to suffer, too. Instead, chill out at your resort, or book private tours on the water or into the wilderness on busy cruise-ship days.

SPEND SOME TIME APART We all know holidays are a time for family bonding, but sometimes you can get too much of a good thing. Adults need adult interaction, and kids benefit from quality time with other small fry. Sign them up for a couple of afternoons at your resort's kids' club or adventure camp. Or, if you hire a babysitter, invite them to bring their own same-age child to hang out as your kid's guest. Mature teens enjoy exploring resort amenities together, but review safety rules beforehand. And let them have fun!

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Tech Essentials for Your Family Road Trip

Robert Liwanag offers three must-have products to keep kids entertained

1 GAMING CONSOLE

For any parent, helping your young passengers pass the time on a road trip can be a challenge. Here's where gaming devices earn their place in the travel pack. The Nintendo 3DS XL gives players access to some of their favourite game characters – Mario, Princess Peach, Yoshi and Pikachu – in 3D! It also allows players to take and record 3D photos and videos. Parental controls, importantly, allow parents to manage what their kids can access on the system as well.

2 KID-FRIENDLY HEADPHONES

Unwanted noise from games while travelling in the car can be distracting for the driver and other members of the family. Designed for parents, LilGadgets offers high-quality headphones for children aged three to eight that address parents' concerns.



They're light, durable, padded and come in a variety of colours.

For parents worried that their children may be listening to music too loudly, LilGadgets' headphones feature a volume-limiting option – in fact, it's one of the few companies out there that actually makes headphones specifically for kids.

3 FAMILY-FRIENDLY PODCASTS

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