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# Hello Tree! Novel Ways to Look at Trees on your Travels

By Y.D. Bar-Ness | September 23rd, 2010

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As you travel around, you might be excited to meet and encounter new cuisines, new adventures, new people, new landscapes, or even new ways of thinking. All of these are meaningful pathways to follow, and I'd like to add to the list ... you can find all sorts of magic and meaning as you encounter individual living trees. Throughout most of the populated world, trees are common, essential, and undervalued. But they are not just things- you can also look at them as persons or places.

There were times and places when all business and pleasure was conducted in the shade of a tree. But now we often ignore them. Some people are interested in trees as academic scientists, or spiritual seekers, hungry fruit-seekers, or practical carpenters. As travellers are exposed to new landscapes and cultures, our responsibility to the environment grows. I encourage you to look at trees in at least ten different ways, and I promise you that they'll enrich your travel experience.

You can think of trees as...

## 1) Landmarks



With a bit of orientation, a prominent tree can be a landmark. If you take a moment to simply recognize an individual tree, your mental map of a new region will be that much more effective. Take special care of how the top of the tree looks, and try to imagine if from different angles.

## 2) Fellow travelers



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Some of the trees that you will encounter on your adventures are also foreigners, far from home. For example, the avocado tree, the mango tree, and the eucalyptus, are all found throughout the world, but they are iconically American, Indian, and Australian. No true blue Australian can pass a gum tree eucalyptus without being reminded of the fragrant forests of home...do you know what the trees from your homeland are? Would you recognize them if you encountered them abroad?

### 3) Resting Places

In hot climates, the shade of a tree is the natural place to relax and cool down. Almost all of the great sages of Asia attained enlightenment under a tree, and if you've ever been walking around in North India's summer sunlight, you'll understand why. Your brain will simply think better if you stop and cool down in the shade. You can get the light out of your eyes, maybe take off your shoes, and lie down without the sun beating on you. Drink some water and take a nap!

### 4) Saviours

Let's face it, the Earth is environmentally stressed, and we are all now aware of our carbon dioxide output. Trees are the most visible major players in converting this carbon dioxide to usable oxygen, and our lives literally depend on them. So let each tree you meet be a reminder of the natural world and the overriding importance of a healthy ecosystem.

### 5) Historical reminders



Being aware of the history of a place can literally add a dimension to your travels. Some of the trees you will encounter are witnesses to the ages, survivors of the years, and bridges to the future. For example, you can find a thousand year old Mulberry in the India Himalaya, trees that survived the atomic blasts at Hiroshima and Nagasaka, and 5,000 year old pine trees in California's White Mountains. You can also find young trees- or even plant them yourself- and help build a connection to future generations of travellers to come.

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## 6) Learning Place



A tree can be a good learning place, whether you are a beginner student or an expert researcher. Most obviously, learning to identify the species of an individual tree is a good place to start learning. But countless other disciplines can be learned through recognition of trees, especially zoology, chemistry, carpentry, agriculture, and, for those relaxing in the shade, philosophy.

## 7) Meeting places

A tree makes a perfect meeting place. What better place than the cool shade of that giant mango tree to connect with your friends? You can always walk to the cafe or bar together from the tree. A tree offers its shade and company for free, and everyone is welcome.

## 8 ) Food providers



There's a vast selection of tangible, tasty rewards for those who know their trees: cherries, walnuts, avocados, mangoes, tamarind, apples, apricots, dates, peaches, plums, nectarines, tangerines, cinnamon, pears, jackfruits, sapote, breadfruits, and of course, coconuts. Yum yum! You can't get more local or inexpensive in your cuisine.

## 9) Playgrounds



Trees can be fun. Put down your pack and climb a tree! Collect some twigs and weave a bracelet for your friend. Put together some leaves and make some artwork. Hang on a branch and make noises like an monkey, trust me, it's fun!

## 10) Local friends

What makes returning to a destination so special? It's the familiarity of the place, and the friends you can meet again. If you've made friends with the local trees, returning to that crowded, polluted, busy city can become like a homecoming. You can introduce the trees you know to your friends, and even the most cynical of humorless travelers will feel a bit more at home in a foreign place.

Good luck in your travels. I'll meet you for a snack at your favorite ancient tamarind tree! We can climb into its branches, search for insects, and relax in the midday sun!

*Y.D. Bar-Ness writes at <http://www.treeoctopus.net>*

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Nature, trees, wildlife, YD Bar-Ness

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