

## - Recreation

# How vacations could benefit mental health

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ASIDE from letting us explore or take a break, what if tourism had real benefits for our mental health? Indeed, the concept of travel therapy is gaining more and more ground among health specialists.



A study from researchers at Australia's Edith Cowan University (ECU), conducted in collaboration with tourism and health experts, explains that while vacations are a time for leisure and relaxing, they can also have a therapeutic aspect.

"Medical experts can recommend dementia treatments such as music therapy, exercise, cognitive stimulation, reminiscence therapy, sensory stimulation and adaptations to a patient's mealtimes and environment," says lead researcher Dr Jun Wen in a statement.

"These are all also often found when on holidays."

Going on vacation provides a change of environment and new experiences. This leads to cognitive and sensory stimulation.

In addition, vacationers spend more time outdoors, which allows them to boost vitamin D and serotonin levels, whether visiting a cold or hot country.

On vacation, we are generally more physically active, typically walking more than usual, for example.

Plus, meals are more likely to be shared experiences, involving socialising with other people, which has "been found to positively influence dementia patients' eating behaviour," says Dr Jun Wen.

All of these experiences combine to represent a "holistic tourism experience."

After two years marked by the Covid pandemic, "it's a good time to identify tourism's place in public health – and not just for healthy tourists, but vulnerable groups," concludes the specialist.