



# A simple way to cope with travel anxiety

by **Anna Brech**  
2 July, 2018

Anxiety is a funny old thing.

Give it centre stage and it will take over your life, turning every little niggle into a full-blown saga (in your head at least).

But ignore it completely, and it's likely to flare up at all the wrong moments, sending you right off-kilter.

If you're the kind of person who is prone to anxious thoughts, the build-up to travel can be a stressful period.

Of course, you're excited and full of anticipation: but at the same time, your brain can't resist jumping on the "what if?" bandwagon.



If this sounds familiar, psychotherapist Karin Peeters – founder of [Vitalis Coaching](#) and travel wellbeing site [Inner Pilgrim](#) – suggests a simple coping mechanism.

*Read more: [Can being single help you live longer?](#)*

“Ask yourself the following questions,” she says. “When exactly do you feel fear? Under which circumstances? With what sort of people? What do you imagine will happen? And after that?”

“Peel off the onion, until you get to the core. You’ll recognise when you’ve hit the essence of your fears by a nervous sensation in the belly area. Sit with the discomfort for a while, breathe slowly and kindly until it settles down.”



*Sit with your anxiety and really pinpoint it*

According to Karin, reaching this point means you have probably stumbled upon an underlying belief that extends beyond travel anxiety alone.

“Very likely you’ve hit a ‘negative core belief’, an underlying script that runs throughout your life,” she says.

“It most likely won’t be unique to going travelling. The belief might sound like ‘I won’t be able to cope’, ‘Nobody likes me’, ‘I’m different’, ‘I’m not good enough’ or ‘things will go wrong and it’s all my fault’.

*Read more: [This productivity hack will change your life](#)*

“These core beliefs are assumptions about ourselves, others and the world. These beliefs stem from earlier experiences and we are afraid they’ll continue to happen. Unconsciously we end up behaving in ways that, despite our deepest wishes, make our fears come true.

“For example, if we fear no-one will like us, we might keep ourselves at a distance out of self-protection to not get rejected and hurt. It’ll be harder for the group to get to know us, which will make us think, ‘you see, I’m the odd one out, they are all friends and nobody likes me.’”



*Travelling the world lets you try on a new you*

The solution, says Karin, is to acknowledge your nervous feelings and check if they fall in your ‘comfort, stretch or panic zone’. Be kind to yourself and avoid the panic zone.

But the stretch zone is your place of inner growth. When you stretch yourself it’s slightly uncomfortable at first. But when you go right ahead with your adventure, you’ll feel the biggest charge to your confidence.

“Going travelling is a chance to put your beliefs to the test,” she explains.

***Read more: [5 bucket list islands to tick off in a lifetime](#)***

“Being with a new group of people gives the opportunity to practise new ways of being. Behave as if the opposite of your belief is true. Test new behaviours. Be how you would be if you’d be confident and care-free.

“I don’t mean being fake. I mean being more yourself than you’d ever dare being with those who know you, and have already formed their opinion of you. Feel the new-ness of the situation, and the fresh energy it brings.”



Karin herself tried this method on a six-month trip to Paris, when she was 19 years old.

“I had the sudden and vivid realisation that nobody knew anything about me,” she says.

***Read more: [What is social anxiety and how can you tackle it?](#)***

“The freedom I felt was enormous and I decided to do an experiment. I was going to be completely myself and find out if this real version of me was going to make any friends.

“I was lonely at times, but also built some life-long friendships. The entire experience was a huge boost for my self-esteem.”



*Karin Peeters, on an adventure in France*

So, the next time your mind starts whirring into play with travel anxiety, just sit with it a while.

Try and get to the root of what's bothering you, then pack that knowledge in your suitcase and take it with you.

Explore it and challenge it. You never know, it could change your life.

*Photos: Karin Peeters, Shutterstock, Flash Pack*

*Karin Peeters is the founder of [Vitalis Coaching](#), a London-based coaching and psychotherapy practice. She is also the founder of [Inner Pilgrim](#). Are you wondering "is this it?", even though your life looks great on paper? Inner Pilgrim is the ideal travel companion to transform your daily routine from just existing to a life filled with soul.*