



When Henry Biernacki was 17 years old, he hopped a Greyhound bus from Colorado to Mexico with nothing but a small backpack, the clothes on his back and a few bucks in his pocket.

He hasn't stopped moving since.

Today, Biernacki is an airline captain with Virgin America and he has traveled to more than 120 countries, but his travel habits haven't evolved much since his teen years. No five-star hotels or limousines for him. Most of the time, he'll get on a plane the same way he boarded that bus – backpack, clothes on his back, a few bucks in his pocket.

In fact, back in 1997, he toured 40 different countries over 11 months, spending only \$3,700 the entire trip. He slept on the streets, in airports, and at times, in a guest house. And that's why he thinks he's been so fortunate. For him, it wasn't about seeing the world – it was about meeting the people along the journey.

“I know how to speak four languages, but I found the one universal language is human kindness,” said Biernacki, author of *No More Heroes* (www.globalhenry.com), a novel loosely based on the true stories of his travels. “I'd literally get on a plane with no worries, no luggage, land in Argentina or any country and just start walking around. The only thing I had to think about was if I needed a Visa for a particular country. I'd sit down at a local café or in a park and just start talking to some of the locals. After a while, some of them would say ‘We don't want to keep you from where you need to go,’ and I'd tell them I had nowhere to go. I was just there to see their country. After an hour or two, one of them would invite me back to their home for a meal and a place to sleep. I can't tell you how many times that happened. This is why I write in dialogue and in a very descriptive manner.”

After visiting 120 countries, world traveler sees few differences between peoples

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Biernacki's open and earnest attitude is not only reflected in his traveling style. It also earned him a spot as a Virgin America airlines spokesperson featured in print ads and billboards around the country. While he makes a living as a pilot, which affords him the ability to fly around the world, Biernacki feels that his real occupation is that of traveler.

"The people I met – these weren't dignitaries or celebrities. They were real people, just like you and me," he added. "They worked for a living, raised their families and just wanted to live by a certain code of human kindness. I never felt like a guest, and they never treated me like a foreigner. So, no matter where I went, I always felt like I was home."

Biernacki never felt like he was ever in danger when he traveled. No matter where he went, he discovered that the differences between peoples and cultures would fade into the background the more he got to meet people.

"Even before I was a pilot, I traveled," he said. "For me, it was a compulsion, but it wasn't about seeing the Eiffel Tower or Trafalgar Square. It was about meeting people, talking to them and getting to know how they lived and what they cared about. I found that, for the most part, they were the same as we are."

Many of them envied the freedom we enjoy in the U.S., but I never got the feeling like they had an issue with me as an American. To them, I was just Henry, the guy they met at the park. It didn't matter to them where I came from, which God I worshipped or how I felt about world affairs. If people can get anything out of the trips that I've taken and the people I've met, I want it to be that we should try to think a little more like them. Once you get past the politics and the religions and the cultures, people all around the world value pretty much the same things we do. They respect a hard day's work, learning about someone new and living a healthy pleasant life."

About Henry Biernacki

Henry Biernacki has traveled to more than 120 countries and continues to travel. He holds a BA in Romance Languages (French/Spanish) and International Affairs. In high school, he was a four sport letterman, whittling it down to only two sports in college. He has lived in France, Germany, Taiwan, The West Indies and Mexico before returning to the United States. Today, Henry is a captain for one of the top airlines in the United States. He flies an Airbus319/320 and has flown Boeing's 747-400/757/767.