

When your vacation is too ‘real’ for Instagram

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Making the best of “obligations”



(Photo: Getty Images)

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In the era of social media, there is an art to documenting travel for the world to see. Photos of colorful cocktails, filtered sunsets and gourmet dinners flood Instagram feeds, declaring to onlookers that the traveler is enjoying a moment of glamour and luxury in a break from the usual obligations.

But what happens when the act of travel isn’t exactly a walk on the beach?

Hampton by Hilton’s #RealTravel approach connects with travelers who know that in real life, vacations aren’t always about sandy beaches and mountain vistas. The truth is that people travel for life reasons, such as visiting relatives, meeting with clients, and for children’s sports. These trips are about showing up where you have to, when you have to,

and trying to have a good time while you're there. For instance, business travelers can break up work and play by adding a day or two before or after a work conference to take a walk in the park, or to take a dip in the hotel pool.

In fact, a [recent poll conducted by USA Today](#) via Twitter received over 27,000 responses about the types of trips people consider to be obligatory vacations — or “obli-cations.”

Respondents clearly identified with the term, citing varying types of getaways that aren't always business, but aren't quite pleasure either. Visiting family came in at the top of the list, with 34% of respondents saying that they consider traveling to visit family an obligation (sorry Grandma).

And a recent [Department of Transportation study](#) confirms that a substantial number of Americans are indeed spending their precious days off from work visiting family. Visits to family or friends constituted 53% of all long-distance travel during Thanksgiving and 43% during Christmas. During the remainder of the year, almost a full quarter of long-distance travel was for the primary purpose of visiting family.

That doesn't mean the traveler won't be able to snap a picture of a cocktail or two (and maybe even some palm trees, depending on where their favorite aunt lives), but it can add an element of inevitability to their travel destinations.

Next on respondents' list of obli-cations, and perhaps most traditionally associated with not-quite-voluntary travel, were business trips. The power of meeting remote clients face-to-face to shake hands and put faces to names shows no sign of slowing down. Even as companies continue to invest in remote communication methods like video conferencing, the business road warrior marches onward. In fact, business travel rose 3.5% in 2016 and Global Business Travel Association [predicts](#) that it will keep rising through 2021.

Ostensibly, a great way for workers to recharge, business travel -- both the back-to-back meeting variety or the obligatory vacation variety -- fell into the murky category of an obligation for 26% of poll respondents.

Not only is business travel on the rise, but so is another newer form of company-sponsored travel that blurs the line between vacation and obligation even further: mandatory time off.

The average American employee only [takes 54% of their paid days off](#) which has become a real issue for employers -- especially in the tech sector where employee burnout is high. Employers are becoming more cognizant of employee burnout as not to lose their most talented employees. But many times, those are the same employees who are glued to their office desks. This often requires employers to *order* these employees to literally get out of

town – whether they want to or not! Just because it stems from the root word “obligation,” though, doesn’t necessarily mean that obligation-goers don’t enjoy themselves or look forward to the trip. Whether it’s a distant cousin’s destination wedding, a Thanksgiving weekend with the in-laws, mandatory time away from your company or an overnight trip with a middle schooler’s travel soccer team, there can be a lot of pleasure in even the mandatory.

Even if you are stuck somewhere that may not have been at the top of your destination list, chances are a room with free Wi-Fi, unlimited coffee and tea in the lobby, and fresh-baked waffles at breakfast will cheer you up. Check into a great room at [Hampton by Hilton](#) for a [long weekend](#) — and take some photos of the family while you’re at it.

Members of the editorial and news staff of the USA Today Network were not involved in the creation of this content.