

## You Can't Go Home

By the time you read this article, I'll be somewhere on the East Coast of the United States, probably trying to not murder any of my blood relatives.

Dealing with family always carries with it the potential for stress. Even those with totally functional families, the pressure of holidays, traveling and spending time in close quarters is always a recipe for difficulty. Add to that changing relationship dynamics and years of lingering resentment about past grievances and the situation has as much potential for disaster as trying to balance a new piece of Ikea furniture on your bike.

Any international who heads back to their country of origin will lament the same struggles. You return home, only to discover you are not the same person and home is not the same place. Trying to organise drinks nights in a country where everyone drives is a headache. Also, places in America do not sell carbonated water, which, frankly, is a crime against humanity. There isn't enough time to visit everyone. The guilt trip of living so far away that you miss all of the big milestone events. The need to explain to why you're choosing to live abroad. The resentment you feel for being forced to spend all of your holiday time in your parents' spare bedroom.

Add some family disfunction, a new relationship, a gathering of extended family members (whom I mostly do not like) and spending several consecutive nights with my parents' whose town isn't even listed on a map and it's no wonder I've called KLM twice to see if I can change my flight destination to anywhere not in the United States.

And yet, I do miss them. I'm envious whenever I call my parents and one of my siblings is there. I'm jealous of the time my family got to spend with my grandmother before she died earlier this year. I miss America too, with its delicious Mexican food and diversity.

So I am packing my bags and steeling myself for the jet lag and fighting and living out of a suitcase and uncomfortable mattress. But, next year, I tell myself, I'm going to Bali.\*

\*There is a 100% chance that next year my column for Toten will be about not learning from past mistakes.