

## Are you taking all your vacation time?

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By Katana Abbott

I just watched Michael Moore's new film, *Where to Invade Next*. He plays the role of "invader" and visits countries overseas to learn how the U.S. can improve the way it does things like education, health care, prisons and much more. At the end of the film, we find out that many of the countries are simply implementing ideas that they said they had gotten from us.

The film opens with a romantic Italian couple talking about their vacations they take each year. They receive approximately six weeks of annual paid vacation and holidays.

When the couple show an interest in coming to live in the U.S., Michael Moore breaks the news that there are no mandatory paid vacation days in the U.S. although they would normally expect about two weeks of vacation time. They are horrified.

I just returned last month from a two-week stay in Brazil and heard many similar stories. I was with a group of 18, and only four of us were Americans. The Europeans think we are crazy. Many of the European countries take about six paid weeks off per year, and the employers encourage it because it helps the employees be more productive, happier, and healthier.

One of the European women I met on my trip owned a business and said she had to fire her employee because he lacked "good work/life balance", because he wouldn't take his paid time off. What a hoot. Could you imagine this in our country?

Well according to a new study by Merrill Lynch and Age Wave, 41% of employed Americans don't use their vacation time, and this is with the little paid time off that we get on average as a country. Another study by staffing firm, The Creative Group, states that 40% of executives think employees would be more productive if they took more vacations. However, 56% of employees say if their companies offered unlimited vacation days, they wouldn't use anymore than they already do. Yikes!

Apparently, there is some sort of fear about being away from work. Some state that the work "needs to get done," and they are worried the work will pile up while they are away. In fact, when asked in the Merrill Lynch report, what percent work on vacation:

- 76% Boomers
- 81% Gen X
- 89% Millennials

Whether you are self-employed, an employee, or a manager, I highly recommend, watching this film to see what is possible. Think outside the box. How can you incorporate fun and pleasure into your life? Are you making time to deepen relationships, to care for your mind, body, and spirit, and simply have more fun?

As a Life and Legacy Coach, I help people create a life they love. I believe the new retirement solution for most of us will be working until we are about 70, but to do that and thrive, we will need to create better work/life balance, create a powerful self-care plan, and of course make the smart financial planning choices. I'd love to hear from you on this topic! Come talk with me at [www.talkwithkatana.com](http://www.talkwithkatana.com).

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