

# Return trips feel shorter in hindsight

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Acacia savanna south of Fada N'Gourma, Burkina Faso. Image: Wikipedia.

People reflecting on a roundtrip walk estimated that the return trip took less time than the outward trip, according to a study published June 10, 2015 in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* by Ryosuke Ozawa from Kyoto University, and colleagues.

Many have experienced the "return trip effect," where the return trip seems shorter than the outward trip, even when the trips actually took the same amount of time. Scientists have studied the effect, but haven't confirm its existence in the context of the environment and duration of the real-life trip. To better understand the return trip effect, the authors of this study compared a group of 20 men watching two of three prerecorded walking movies, of either an outbound trip and a return trip or two outbound trips. The participants estimated the length of the two

movies both while watching and then again after the two trips.

Only the participants from the group watching an outbound trip and a return trip-a roundtrip-estimated that the second trip took less time than the first trip. Furthermore, the participants felt the return trip effect only when reflecting on length after the trips. By comparing the round-trip condition and the non-round-trip condition, the authors suggest that the return trip on a roundtrip may actually make us feel that time is shorter even without walking, and that the return trip effect may not affect the timing mechanism itself, but rather our feeling of time retrospectively. Further research is needed to better understand the contribution of the awareness of "return," since the labeling such as "roundtrip" or "return" may be another factor in inducing the [cognitive bias](#) of the return trip effect.

**More information:** Ozawa R, Fujii K, Kouzaki M (2015) The Return Trip Is Felt Longer Only Postdictively: A Psychophysiological Study of the Return Trip Effect. *PLoS ONE* 10(6): e0127779. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0127779](#)

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