

<b>Allow Souvenirs to Complement not Clutter Your Home</b>	<b>Vali G. Heist, Author and Certified Professional Organizer®</b>
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Last week I was “The Girl On The Train” sans the drama. I was traveling home from a visit with a long-time friend who lives in Natick, Massachusetts. It’s been years since we spent quality time together and she also wanted to show me her new condo after downsizing from a larger condo. One of the things that my friend does best is decorate her home with treasures from her travels. When I walked into her new home, it was unmistakably her place: tastefully decorated with her beautiful items and all clutter donated and sold.

When I work with clients to organize and simplify their homes, they work hard to let go of the CRAP (Clutter that Robs Anyone of Pleasure). One of the outcomes of uncluttering is that my clients think differently because they are conscious of the extra clutter that can and does accumulate in a home over the years. They even tell me they feel guilty about shopping; an outcome I’m comfortable with. What I tell them is staying organized and uncluttered doesn’t mean you stop shopping, but it does mean you are a savvy consumer instead of an unconscious consumer. A savvy shopper thinks twice before each purchase by asking all or some of these questions:

- Do I need this?
- Do I have a place for this?
- Is there something else I can let go of if I buy this?
- Do I like this item better than what I already have?



In my own home I aspire to follow a quote by the designer guru Nate Berkus. He said, *“Everything in my home is a reminder of a place I’ve been or someone I love.”* Vacations and traveling usually involve buying souvenirs and it can be hard to say no to bringing home a little bit of your memories. When I travel I sometimes bring home an item that reminds me of my trip, but I still ask myself the questions listed above before I purchase. Here are a few more guidelines to have no regrets when bringing home souvenirs from your travels:

- If you bring home new clothing, try to let go of some that you’ll no longer wear because of this new item(s).
- Go clutter-free by taking pictures or get a tattoo to commemorate your trip (I do this when I travel to see my son.)
- If you buy a new item, can it replace something you currently have and are ready to give away?
- Paint or decorate your home to remind you of your trip (A friend stenciled her outside fencing to look like a backyard in Charleston).

Finally, memories can be just as good as souvenirs. My husband and I traveled to Mickey’s house years ago and our favorite ‘souvenirs’ were the memories we had eating with our son in the different countries in Epcot and Walt Disney World. Full disclosure, I traveled to Mexico over 10 years ago with the friend I just visited in Massachusetts and I brought home three suitcases full of Mexican Talavera dishes and handmade glassware. I had been on the hunt for new dishes for years so when I came home, I let go of boxes of old dinnerware and glassware and replaced it with my new treasures. Each time I use them I am transported back to Mexico and enjoy those dishes, with no regrets.