How to have a fun and productive sabbatical

Advice to my younger self

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1. Academic careers are long, but time is always short.

You’ll need unstructured time to think about where you’ve been, where you want to go, learn new skills, and to write.
2. It is easier to get unstructured time if you leave campus.

If you can, plan to take sabbatical at another institution; seek a place that draws other academics.
3. Set clear goals for what you want to accomplish.

Articulate the small steps needed to accomplish each goal. Write a proposal.
4. Your graduate students will be fine while you are away. Service tasks will be done capably by others.

Be sure to develop a clear plan for communicating with your lab.
5. Aim to expand the network of people that care about you, your research and your career.

Seek out people with mutual interests who can give feedback on your ideas, and offer to reciprocate. Present your research at institutions in the region.
6. Start planning for sabbatical about one year in advance

- University leave application
- VISA applications
- Grant applications
7. Take advantage of support services at your host institution.

- Travel/Scholar VISA applications
- Academic/cultural acclimation
- Visit sabbaticalhomes.com
8. Embrace serendipity.

“Making discoveries, by accident or discernment, of things they were not in quest of...”

-Horace Walpole
9. There will be a re-adjustment period when you return. Don’t be too hard on yourself; it will take time to make the transition back to regular faculty responsibilities.