

THE TOP 15

travelright.today

# BEST TRAVEL TIPS

## OF ALL TIME





TravelRight.Today is committed to making every holiday minute count – *and* making travel more accessible. We do this by having a clear picture of the best practices to adopt en route from Point A to B, and then also to C, and back to A, so you can experience countries, cultures and cuisines in the most efficient and thorough way possible.

We hope these tips will inspire you to be less of a tourist and more of a traveller. Because when the travel bug bites, no Benadryl pen in the world is going to make the itch go away. >

# 1. MAKE TRAVEL A NECESSITY – NOT A LUXURY.



While everyone has different ideas on how to spend their money, travel should never be at the bottom of the list.

The benefits of getting out of Dodge are so far-reaching that the value is immeasurable. And while travel is rarely cheap, ear-marking annual cash for time abroad is more than doable:

1. Find a credit card that offers the best travel points option and use it – at the grocer, at the drugstore, even to buy a take-out lunch. Rack up the points with every cent you spend. The interest rates will be high, so you'll need to pay it off every month and never run a balance. Travel cards are rated annually, so research the reviews to help you find the best one.
2. Start browsing for vacation packages well before the sun, ski or European seasons begins. The earlier you book, the better the price – and the more likely you are able to pay for it all before you even step on the plane.
3. Tuck away a few dollars every week or every paycheck. See if your bank can make this saving automatic.
4. Travelling just before or after high season can lead to savings and some destinations offer incredible deals during their lowest period. Think Mexico in September, Europe in November, New Zealand in June.
5. Consider spending time in your own country. No exchange rates, language barriers, tariffs or border patrol, and so on.

People who wait until tax time is over before they decide whether or not they can afford to go somewhere will never go anywhere. Mark the calendar and buy a ticket. >

## 2. DO YOUR HOMEWORK. THEN DO SOME MORE OF IT.



I once went to [Chicago](#) without doing any research beforehand – and winging it works to a certain extent.

But I am still kicking myself for being around the corner from a great menswear store and not realizing it. Never again! To get the most out of your holiday, research until your eyes bleed:

1. Hit the Internet to read absolutely everything you can about your destination, including the reviews of other travellers.
2. Head to Google Maps to see what's located near your hotel – the smoothie place, the diner, the drugstore, the pubs.
3. Google “alternative press” along with the name of the city to discern what the weekly paper is. Then get the goods on where to eat, drink, look at art, get a haircut or see a show.
4. Canvas friends who have visited the destination before for their recommendations.
5. Learn what areas you want to explore, how to get there and how long it will take to cover the ground. Don't waste precious vacation time sitting on the computer in your hotel room.
6. Make dinner reservations in advance from home. Cities like Boston seem to have way more people than restaurant chairs.
7. Buy all theatre tickets in advance, but hold off booking tours until you can employ the (free) concierge desk for pointers once you arrive. They will also be able to flag road closures and give transit directions.
8. Speaking of which, for God's sake figure out the subway. >

### 3. TWO-PRONGED HOLIDAYS DOUBLE YOUR FUN.



PABLO GARCIA SALDANA

Multiple-destination travel used to be for those with time *on* their hands or money *in* their hands.

The rest of us simply picked a vacation spot, went there once a year, came home, rebooked next year and got the loyalty discount.

The latest travel trends in this age of online custom holiday-making are to either extend a layover, with a day or overnight in a connecting city to break up the monotony of a long flight, or to combine a mad weekend in the big city with a quiet stint on the beach. You get to experience two completely different sides of the coin, often without doubling the price:

**1.** If you're flying through one of the bigger hubs like Frankfurt, stay for a night or two and belly up to the bratwurst. Or maybe Icelandair has great prices on flights to London where a Reykjavik stopover is free. Root around and see what you come up with.

**2.** A good example of the fast-slow vacation curation is to spend a few days screaming around the bars and restaurants in San Jose, Costa Rica, combined with a few days lying on the beach at Quepos. With a little extra planning, you get city and sand, all in one week. ➤

## 4. WEEKENDS AWAY DON'T HAVE TO BREAK THE BANK.



TODD QUACKENBUSH

Sure, I'd *love* to spend 12 days in Brazil – but I'll make do with three nights in New York no problem.

A change is as good as a rest, and a weekend out of town is sometimes just as restful as a week. And while yes, you are going to drop some cash, there are many ways to cut costs:

1. Scare up some travel points for the flights, even if you have to mooch from both your credit card and your Aeroplan card.
2. Last-minute and/or discount booking apps can chop hotel bills in half – and there are many to choose from. They seem to breed over night. Bundling the flight with the hotel will also save you money.
3. Find a hotel with breakfast included, eat lunch at a food truck on the street, then hit a cool taco joint for cheap and cheerful dinner. That's not even \$100 a day for two people.
4. Spend the money you saved on last night's dinner on next night's dinner.
5. Add a dash of romance by spending cocktail hour in the bar at an iconic hotel you could never afford.
6. Resources like StubHub.com can get you seats for top sporting events and concerts at a fraction of the price.
7. Window shopping is free! Some art galleries are free! Long walks in the park are free! Sex at the hotel is free! Well, it had better be!

Getting up on Friday morning knowing that your five o'clocktail is going to be a Manhattan in Manhattan is just so freaking exciting. >

## 5. NEVER LEAVE PACKING TO THE LAST MINUTE.



You know those people who turn up at the cottage with only one t-shirt? There's one in every crowd.

Or they show up with no phone cord or toothpaste or that essential extra layer of outerwear or sunscreen or bug spray or waterproof footwear. (You know who you are.)

Don't let that be you. Suitcases and carryons need your full attention at least a week before you jet off:

1. Haul a suitcase out of the closet and throw in the seasonal stuff you know you'll need right away. Dig out the sandals and the snorkel. This is also a good time to discern if anything needs to be mended or replaced. Or dry-cleaned.
2. Start a list on your phone and add to it as things occur to you. Make another list of items you need to buy (like sunscreen).
3. Do a big wash several days beforehand and throw all your favourite items into the suitcase. Is there going to be a washer and dryer at your B&B? Or a laundromat nearby? This can sometimes halve the amount of clothes you need to take.
4. Always, always pack a swimsuit. Even if you're going to the Arctic. Better yet, pack gym clothes that can double as swimwear. Always, always bring at least the one pair of waterproof shoes.
5. Give one complete outfit to your partner to pack – and vice versa – in case one suitcase doesn't hit the baggage carousel.
6. Speaking of which, never put anything in your bags that you can't afford to lose. >

## 6. BE PREPARED FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES.



My doctor came up with the idea to create a medical travel kit when I told him I was going to Australia for a month.

He handed me prescriptions for eye drops, a couple of different creams, medicine for food poisoning, and various antibiotics and pain-killers. He said: "You don't need to pay a doctor in Sydney \$500 to tell you that you've sprained your ankle." It all came with a little list to tell me what to take for each ailment that could crop up. At the time, I had a robust insurance plan, so the cost was minimal. The peace of mind was extraordinary.

If this seems like overkill to you, create your own kit, including:

1. Two kinds of pain-relievers: ibuprofen such as Advil (an anti-inflammatory) and acetaminophen such as Tylenol. You can combine these two for maximum pain management.
2. Some kind of sinus congestion medicine and cold/flu tablets.
3. After-Bite, a topical ointment for minor cuts and alcohol-based wipes for disinfecting.
4. Anti-diarrhea medicine, an antacid for heartburn and anti-nausea medicine for motion sickness. In fact, you should pack this in your carryon.
5. Rehydration salts such as Gastrolyte to replenish electrolytes lost from dehydration – too much sun or vomiting/diarrhea.
6. Various sizes of adhesive bandages.
7. A throat lozenge or four.

Make sure your travel insurance is in order should larger problems befall you. Check with your doctor before taking any medication. Don't forget your vitamins. >

## 7. SET YOUR BRAIN ON STUN.



Years ago, I was looking forward to a week on the beach – and it took me until Wednesday to calm the hell down.

What a terrible waste of a Sunday, Monday and Tuesday! I have since wised-up.

While it's natural to be a little anxious before a vacation, depressurize as fast as possible while you're en route, so you can arrive at your destination well on the road to nowhere:

1. Try to start calming down the second you leave the house. Leave lots of time so you're not rushing or in any kind of panic.
2. Your phone should be the first to go. Deal with the last few emails in the cab, then turn it off for at least 24 hours.
3. Just take it as a given that Security and/or Customs is going to be hairy and chill. Slow easy breathing should take care of this. You can also think about how great you're going to feel after your first SCUBA dive. Don't waste your air – huffing and puffing in the lineups.
4. If you get bored at the airport, people-watch.
5. No working on the plane, only reading. Crack open the new novel even before takeoff.
6. Make the world go away. Nothing beats the womblike sound of your own breathing than quality earplugs.
7. Once you've arrived, resist the urge to keep opening your laptop. If you do have to reconnect with the world every day, try to do it just once. Only deal with urgent matters and funnel everything else into a "Hold" folder. Then, don't open it until you return home. Let your email bounce do the talking. >

## 8. COZY UP TO HOSPITALITY STAFF AT EVERY TURN.



TIM STEWART

I once travelled with a journalist who walked into a London hotel and immediately gave the concierge £10.

He then stunned the front-desk clerk with a high-five. He was so charming and happy and energetic – and loud! And you know what? The clerk upgraded his room and the concierge fit him into a busy salon for a last-minute haircut.

While you may not be a high-fiver, ingratiating yourself to hotel staff, shop-keepers, cab-drivers and the like can work absolute wonders:

1. Smile, smile, smile.
2. Always be the model of patience, even when you want to explode. This is the Canadian way!
3. Be aware that flight attendants have the capacity to double up your drink for free. Or not.
4. You can often get great advice from the cab driver on where to eat, what areas of town to shop in, what streets to avoid, etc.
5. Never be shirty with housekeeping staff for so many reasons! But mostly because they clean your filthy, filthy bathroom.
6. Hoteliers and restaurant owners often have a real passion for something – a vegetable garden, a wine cellar, a koi pond by the lake. Finding out what that is can often make your stay more memorable.
7. Never travel with anyone who is rude to the waiter. >

## 9. AT LEAST TRY TO SPEAK THE NATIVE TONGUE.



While you may never master Turkish or Japanese, you can learn how to say hello and goodbye, please and thank you.

You should also be able to count to five, order a beer and ask for a receipt. Add in a smile – make that several acres of smiling – and you will get along with your new friends swimmingly.

People are usually so appreciative when you make an effort to communicate in their language. Don't just speak English louder and slower. Please remember that when you are in a foreign country, *you* are the foreigner, so stop it with the "el hairdryer problemo." Here are some tips:

1. Pack a pocket-sized phrase book and use it. Pull it out at lunch so you can read the menu yourself. Absolutely no flapping of the arms for “chicken.”
2. Buy an app for your phone, specifically one with a pronunciation feature so you can actually hear the words.
3. Don’t just download the free one.
4. Before you leave home, have a coffee with one of your friends who speaks the language of the country you’re visiting for a few tips.
5. If you find yourself in one particular country more often than not, invest in a copy of Fluenz language-learning software for your laptop. >

## 10. DON'T LET STREET BEGGING FREAK YOU OUT.



GREGOR YOUNGER

**Help!** These gangsters are trying to corral me to their cousin's restaurant to have lunch!

Help! This homeless mother is trying to force me to buy a tin of tuna for her child! Help! I may actually strike one of these children if they don't STOP TOUCHING MY PANT LEGS!

Does this sound like you? You know what? You're fine. You're better than fine: You flew on a plane and are spending hundreds of dollars to experience a foreign nation. These people know you are flush! Keep in mind:

- 1.** They may have absolutely nothing. No, they may have *less* than nothing.
- 2.** Yes, they can get a little desperate. Try to realize that and put yourself in their shoes.
- 3.** If you don't want to stop and talk about whatever they're selling, smile and press on.
- 4.** If things get pushy, be firm but polite.
- 5.** If the demand is constant, as it can be on a public beach, just ignore it.

All this being said, you very likely *do* have time to buy a few handmade trinkets or drop money into the busker's guitar case or pop into a shop to buy that aforementioned tin of tuna. Do a few good deeds while you're on holiday and you will be a better person for it. >

## 11. KNOW WHEN TO SAVE AND WHEN TO SPLURGE.



ANTHONY DELANOIX

I've always felt that the word "spendthrift" is nothing but a mixed message. (Look it up.)

Smart travellers *get* the fact that they need to cut corners in some areas so they can afford something else down the road. Smart spending is just as important as thrift smarts:

1. Stopover in Minnesota? Save at a discount hotel chain.
2. Stopover in L.A.? Splurge at a boutique hotel on the beach.
3. Spending a fortune on flights? Save on the hotel (or rent an apartment).
4. Quick business trip by yourself? Save with a web deal, then splurge on a nice meal or a massage.
5. Taking your parents? Splurge on Mom; play it by ear with Dad.
6. Taking the kids? Save as much as you can. (They won't care.)
7. Backpacking for a week and dog-tired? Splurge on the thread count.
8. Never likely visiting your destination ever again? Splurge on something memorable.

Sometimes thrift, while admirable, gets in the way of a good time. The solution: (Sorry, you're on your own with this one.) >

## 12. SLEEP WHEN YOU CAN.



This wise travel adage never gets tired. (Sorry.)

Most of the time, travelling is hard work.

Even lying on the beach all day gets tiring, right? Because making every holiday minute count often leads to fatigue, you're going to need to learn how to catnap.

You never know when noisy neighbours or a vomiting child are going to keep you up all night, so:

1. Start off on the right foot. Try to get a good night's sleep the night before you leave home. No hangovers allowed. Speaking of which, alcohol just tends to make an in-flight nap more fitful.
2. For red-eye flights, tell yourself: "It's currently 4 a.m. where I'm landing." The power of suggestion can work wonders.
3. For all moving vehicles – except dogsleds and speedboats – make sure you have an inflatable neck pillow, ear plugs and an eye mask in your pocket.
- 4 There's no shame in popping a sleep aid, even if you want to keep it simple with melatonin or a half a Gravol.
5. Rather than bore yourself to death shadowing an avid shopper, find a nearby park bench and doze off. Just try not to get rolled for your sneakers. >

## 13. BRING THE KIDS. OR NOT.



DOUG WALLACE

Children who travel experience an eye-opening that they will never learn in school.

The Impressionable young minds grow up to be young adults who see the world differently – because they’ve actually been out walking around in it. Who doesn’t want their offspring to be a global citizen? Just a few pointers here:

1. Choose a destination where the change in climate is not too drastic for their little bodies.
2. Make a very detailed packing list (even if you think you don’t need to), writing down everything from the basics to weather-appropriate clothes.
3. Resist the urge to pack the entire nursery. Places worth their salt will have larger items like high chairs, usually at no charge. Ask them before leaving home.
4. Pack more of things you won’t likely be able to buy.
5. Take advantage of the babysitting services at your resort, so you can have at least a little alone-time.
6. Don’t spend money on things your child is too young to ever remember experiencing.
7. Watch, watch, watch what you put in their volatile stomachs.
8. Don’t feel guilty if you decide to leave them at home. They can take a vacation when they make their *own* money. >

## 14. REKINDLE THE FLAME.



I once heard that the execs from a big hotel chain nixed new sofa designs, because they were too hard to have sex on.

What a thing to have to worry about! But hey, you should be thinking about it too: Nothing sparks romance quite like a holiday. Chew on these:

1. While vacations are expensive enough right out of the gate, think about splurging for a bigger room. This will heighten the sense of occasion and give you a nicer place to hide out if the weather turns.
2. Give your vacation a name. Something fun like Our 22nd Honeymoon, Romancing the Bone or Hot Pursuit?
3. Two little words: couples massage. This often includes strawberries and wine, *and* they leave you alone afterward.
4. Two more little words: surprise gift. When was the last time you bought important jewellery?
5. Step outside your comfort zones with a sporty afternoon of adventure, something neither of you have ever done before: learn how to sail, go spelunking, go horseback riding.
6. Read a novel to each other, taking turns alternating the chapters. Act out the different voices of the dialogue.
7. Make a video. (No, not that kind.) Something you can have fun editing together at home later – or on the fly – to share with family and friends. >

## 15. DON'T BE AFRAID TO GO OFF-SCRIPT.



BENJAMIN COMBS

Travelling isn't really about hotels and shops and museums, it's about people and stories and food.

I apologize in advance for the clichés and finger-wagging:

1. Pack your sense of adventure. Allow things to happen to you. I mean, what else have you got to do?
2. No "hurrying up to have fun." Relax and live in the moment.
3. Travelling is a great chance to step outside yourself. Don't pass that up. Talk to strangers, learn how to throw a pot, go to a yoga class for the first time in your life, smoke a cigar.
4. Foul weather happens. Don't give it one ounce of brainspace.
5. Be conscious of the proclivities of your travel mates. Moods, comfort zones, whims, good and bad habits – you can't control these things, but it helps to be aware of them.
6. Know when to shut up on the train and when to break out into song on the mountaintop.
7. Don't sweat the small stuff. (That would make a great book!)
8. Learn how to improvise. You know what they say about the best-laid plans. And if things happen that are less than ideal – and they will – do what my friend Stevie Winwood says and roll with it, baby.

Bon voyage! 

