

# 61 Savvy Travel Tips

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Most people aren't born savvy travelers. It's something that only [comes with on the road experience](#). In the beginning, you make a lot of mistakes. Travel savviness is a process born of missed buses, foolish behavior, cultural unawareness, and countless tiny errors. Then, one day, you begin to seamlessly move through airports and integrate yourself into new cultures like a fish to water.

I want to help speed up the process so you can avoid my mistakes ([I make a lot of them](#)) so I put together this giant list of travel tips. It covers everything under the sun to ensure you reach your full travel ninja potential!

1. **Always pack a towel.** It's the key to successful galactic hitchhiking and plain common sense. You never know when you will need it, whether it's at the beach, on a picnic, or just to dry off.
2. **[Buy a small backpack/suitcase](#).** It will force you to pack light and avoid carrying too much stuff.
3. **[Pack light](#).** It's ok to wear the same t-shirt a few days in a row. Take half the clothes you think you will need...you won't need the rest of it.
4. **But take extra socks.** You'll lose a bunch to laundry gremlins so packing extra will come in handy.
5. **Take an extra bank card and credit card with you.** Disasters happen. It's always good to have a backup in case you get robbed or lose a card. You don't want to be stuck somewhere new without access to your funds.
6. **[Make sure to use no-fee bank cards](#).** Don't give banks your hard earned money. Keep that for yourself and spend it on your travels.
7. **Don't be afraid to use a map.** Looking like a tourist isn't as bad as getting really lost and ending up in the wrong neighborhood.

8. **But don't be afraid to get purposefully lost.** Wandering aimlessly through a new city is a good way to get to know it. You might be surprised by the hidden gems you find.
9. **Travel by yourself at least once.** You'll learn a lot about yourself and how to become independent. It's cliché, but it's true. Solo travel taught me how to fend for myself, talk to people, and handle unfamiliar situations with ease.
10. **Always visit the local tourism office.** They know everything going on in town. They can point you to free activities, special events happening during your stay, and everything in between. Use this resource!
11. **On international flights, book window seats so you can rest your head on the bulkhead.** Also, book seats close to the front so you can beat everyone to the passport control line.
12. **Don't buy a money belt — they're stupid.** Thieves know they exist and being seen with one basically shouts, "Look at me, I'm a tourist with money! Rip me off!"
13. **When you go out, take only what you need.** Limit the amount of cash and bank cards you carry with you so if something does happen, you can easily recover.
14. **Always carry a lock.** They come in handy, especially when you stay in dorms and need to lock your stuff up.
15. **Make extra copies of your passport and important documents.** Don't forget to email a copy to yourself that way you'll almost always have access to them, one way or another.
16. **Look both ways when you cross the street.** Especially in countries whose traffic flow is different than you're used to.

17. **Ask hostel staff for information — even if you're not staying there.** They deal with budget travelers all day, every day. They know exactly where to go for cheap meals and attractions.
18. **[Learn basic phrases in the native language of your destination.](#)** The locals will appreciate it and it will make your interactions easier.
19. **Read a history book!** You can't understand a place's present if you don't know anything about its past. Read up on the destinations you are visiting.
20. **Don't be ashamed to go to a Starbucks.** Sometimes familiarity is comforting.
21. **But do be ashamed if you go into McDonald's.** Seriously. That shit is gross and unhealthy.
22. **[Shop around.](#)** When booking flights, sometimes it's cheaper to fly into airports close to your final destination, and then take a train or bus to where you need to go.
23. **Always get behind business travelers when in security lines.** They move fast. Try to keep up.
24. **Never get behind families.** They take forever. It's not their fault; they just have a lot of stuff.
25. **When you check in to the hotel, don't be afraid to ask for an upgrade.** They have a lot of flexibility and it can't hurt to ask.
26. **Libraries, Starbucks, and most cafes have free Wi-Fi** if you're staying someplace that charges you to connect.
27. **Lunchtime is the best time to visit historical sites.** The sites empty out and you'll have fewer crowds to fight.

28. **[Never eat in a touristy area or near a tourist attraction.](#)** As a general rule, I walk five blocks in either direction before I find a place to eat.
29. **Locals don't eat out every night and neither should you.** Go grocery shopping. You can learn a lot about the local diet by seeing what food they buy.
30. **Eat at expensive restaurants during lunch.** They often offer lunch specials — the same food as dinner but half the price.
31. **Pack a flashlight.** It will let you see at night, help you avoid stepping on stuff, and help you tell ghost stories. Who's afraid of the dark?
32. **[Carry a basic first-aid kit.](#)** Accidents happen, so be prepared. I carry bandaids, antibacterial cream, and ointments for cuts and scrapes.
33. **Book flights 3-4 months in advance to get the best price.** And don't drive yourself too crazy trying to get the absolute cheapest fare. Spending five hours to try to save \$10 will cause you a lot of stress.
34. **[Stay in hostels.](#)** They are cheap and you'll meet a lot of people! Hostel bars also have cheap drinks!
35. **[Use Meetup, sharing economy, and hospitality websites to meet locals.](#)** They'll be able to give you the insider's perspective on your destination.
36. **[Be open to strangers.](#)** Not everyone bites. You just might make some life-long friends.
37. **But keep your guard up.** Some people do bite. Keep a healthy level of suspicion.
38. **Try new food.** Don't ask what it is. Just put it in your mouth and see if you like it. If you put your guard up, you might miss out on some



unusual and delicious local cuisine.

39. **Avoid taxis.** They are always a budget buster.
40. **[Bring a reusable water bottle.](#)** Drink from the tap when you can — you'll save money and help the environment.
41. **Take free walking tours.** Besides being free, these tours provide a solid orientation and introduction to the city you are in.
42. **Get city attraction cards.** If you are going to visit a lot of museums and other attractions in a short period of time, a city pass will save you money on admission (plus most provide free public transportation too!).
43. **Take pictures of your luggage and clothes.** If your bag gets lost, this will help identify it more easily and speed up the process of having your travel insurance reimburse you.
44. **Carry emergency cash.** Because emergencies happen. Like that time in Romania when I couldn't find an ATM and needed money for the bus!
45. **Get good shoes.** You walk a lot when you travel. Don't beat up your feet. Love them as much as they love you, and they'll take you to amazing places.
46. **Get vaccinated.** Falling prey to an illness in a foreign country isn't fun.
47. **Learn to haggle.** Haggling is a fun, playful way of not getting charged the foreigner price. It's the art of negotiating and one that will help you throughout all of life, not just at the market.
48. **[Use points and miles for free travel.](#)** You can go a lot further in the world when you don't have to pay for it. Make sure everything you do gets you miles.

49. **Take a jacket.** Nights get chilly.
50. **Eat street food!** If you skip the street food, you miss out on culture. Don't be scared. If you're nervous, look for places where kids are eating. If it's safe for them, it's safe for you.
51. **Get travel insurance.** Don't be foolish. If something goes wrong, you don't want to be out thousands of dollars in bills. Travel insurance is the most important thing you get that you never want to use.
52. **Be patient.** Things will work out in the end. No need to rush. You'll get to where you are going in due time. Travel is about the journey, not the destination.
53. **Be respectful.** Locals are willing to help you out, but there's probably a language barrier, so keep your cool when something doesn't go your way. If you don't, you'll end up just looking like an asshole tourist.
54. **Don't over plan your trip.** Let your days unfold naturally. Schedule two or three things and let the day fill in the rest on its own. It's less stressful and letting the day just take you is one of the best ways to travel.
55. **Relax.** See Be patient.
56. **Be frugal — but not cheap.** Don't be penny wise but pound-foolish. Look for deals and don't waste money, but don't miss out on great experiences or walk 10 miles to save a couple of dollars. Time is money. Spend them both wisely.
57. **Take earplugs.** Snorers are everywhere and you need your sleep.
58. **Search incognito.** If you are going to be searching for flights, use the incognito feature in your browser to hide your browsing history so booking websites don't track your cookies and raise the price on you.

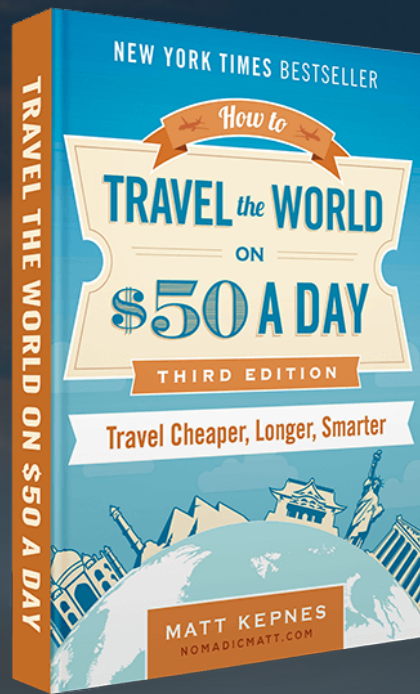
59. **Always have an extra USB charger.** Batteries die. Your good mood shouldn't.
60. **Take photos of and with people.** Lots of photos. Years from now, you'll want to look back on those nights you can't remember and the people who made them memorable.
61. **Finally, wear sunscreen.** For as the Baz Luhrmann song "Everybody's Free (To Wear Sunscreen)" goes:

*"If I could offer you only one tip for the future, sunscreen would be it. The long-term benefits of sunscreen have been proved by scientists Whereas the rest of my advice has no basis more reliable Than my own meandering experience."*

Matthew Kepnes writes the blog, Nomadic Matt, which gets over a million visitors per month. He also wrote the *New York Times* best-selling book, [How to Travel the World on \\$50 a Day](#). His writing has been featured in the *New York Times*, *CNN*, *National Geographic*, *Huffington Post*, *The Guardian*, and more.

Keep up with Matt on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Pinterest](#), and on the [forums](#).





# HOW TO TRAVEL THE WORLD ON \$50 A DAY

LEARN TO TRAVEL SMARTER

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- » *“The bible for budget travelers” - BBC*
- » Master the art of budget travel
- » Enjoy a richer travel experience in any destination

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