

Handy Travel Tips for You

So you love traveling. That much we have gathered. How you should plan your travel is what we can tell you. As we see it, you could either be in a '*just pick up and go*' kind of mood, or you might be planning a proper family vacation for your annual holiday. Either ways, it does not harm to have some handy tips, to make sure you get it right. Of course, if you are in a *quick holiday* mood, you would not be doing so much planning. But read on, in any case. Chances are you would go for a planned vacation next!

Research Your Destination

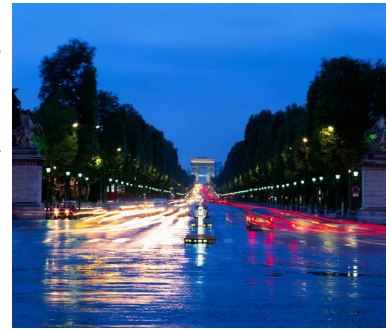
1. Beginning with the toughest question, where to go! This decision should be made based on few factors, the most important of which are - who your co-travelers are, the type of vacation, the duration of vacation AND the budget, though we do wish that the last mentioned factor did not matter. If you sort out these few things beforehand, it will make it easier to do a narrower research on the type of place you wish to visit.

2. Shortlist a few destinations that you like, and you can make the final selection after discussing with your co-travelers.

3. While researching, find out the following facts and reviews about the desired destination:

- Weather (General as well as warnings, if any)
- Currency and conversion rates
- Visa Formalities and Customs Restrictions
- Language(s) spoken (and common spoken sentences in the foreign language, such as greetings)
- Cultural differences, if any
- Popular food (so that you don't miss out on that)
- Famous tourist spots and attractions (better to have some information on these, rather than completely depending on the hotel front desk)
- Safety (information on places to avoid at night)
- Maps and Driving Directions to your hotel and to tourist spots (if you are traveling by your own car)

Some of these can be deciding factors for your final choice. In any case, you should know something about the place before you visit it. You would not want to be taken for a ride when there.



Select Your Hotel/Resort



1. Once you have the destination decided, its time to zero down on where to stay. Again, the most important deciding factor would be your budget, but there is another equally important aspect that you should consider. Do you wish to use the hotel only as a place to spend the night, with the major part of your vacation spent in exploring your destination inside out? Or, you wish to choose a beautiful resort with lots of facilities and plan to relax in the resort itself? If it's the former, you should simply select a decent hotel which is near the airport/train station (if using either of these) and preferably the tourist spots that you wish to visit. If it's the latter, well, then the views from your room, the facilities that the resort has to offer and the quality of food available becomes important.

2. When short-listing the hotels, be sure to visit each hotel's website, rather than depending on a small paragraph that you read somewhere on a travel website. That will give you a complete idea of what you will find there. This is true even if the bookings are handled by a travel agent. We don't

know about you, but we do not want unpleasant surprises on our trip.

3. If you are doing an online booking like everyone else today, make sure that the hotel has a secure payment option on their website before providing your credit card information. And do not forget to read their cancellation policies. Even change of dates can cost you a lot, so be careful while booking. While booking, also check if the hotel provides complimentary or paid pickup from the airport or train station. This really helps if in foreign land.

4. Note: You can get a travel agent to do all your bookings for you, from your flights, to your hotel bookings, to tickets for tourist attractions. It's convenient, sure, but you do not have as much control over your vacation and expenses. Our suggestion would be that even if you go for a travel agent to handle everything for you, be on top of things. Make sure you know which flights/hotels they are in process of booking for you, so that you can make changes if you need to, on time.

Pack Your Bags

1. We swear by lists. Lists come in handy all the time. Having one paranoid soul in the house who makes lists for everything actually helps, especially before traveling! If there is no such person, it's time to pick up a pen, or at least start typing on the keyboard.

2. While packing for traveling, the type and duration of trip have to be kept in mind of course. For most types of trips, these essentials will do the trick though. Make a note:

- Passports and Tickets
- Electronic Money (ATM/Debit Cards, Credit Cards, Travelers Checks)
- Foreign Currency (if required)
- Travel Insurance
- Wallet and/or Waist Pouch (which is handy and safe)
- Travel-sized Toiletries & Cosmetics
- Clothes and Accessories
- Digital Camera and/or Camcorder AND their chargers and extended batteries (if you have any)
- Mobile AND charger
- Electrical adaptors (if required)
- Common medicines (fever, pain, common cold, travel sickness, anti allergic) and simple first aid
- Baby essentials, if traveling with baby (stroller & car seat, diaper bag with diapers, bottles, formula, few disposal bags, baby toiletries, baby medicines, change of clothes, baby eatables, baby books and toys)
- Kids' stuff, if traveling with kids (Kids eatables, travel games, interesting books)
- Travel comfort products (Neck pillows, ear plugs, sleep mask, fleece blanket)
- Miscellaneous Items - If there is no space crunch, these things may come in handy - an umbrella, a mini tool kit, small kit with needle and thread, a small scissors and a small nail-cutter



Do Not Carry: Excessive Cash and Jewelry

3. For ease of travel, carrying backpacks and bags with wheels is a very good idea. If traveling with a baby with lots of stuff in a diaper bag and no stroller to carry it for you, a backpack which contains the baby stuff is much easier to handle than a shoulder bag.

4. If traveling by air, remember to pack luggage according to flight restrictions. It is great to have a weigh scale in the house to make sure you don't have to shell out extra money at the check in counter. Also, try to keep the hand baggage to a minimum for convenience. However, consider keeping some essentials in the hand baggage in case your check in bags get delayed or lost. Since airport

and in flight restrictions are tighter, it is best to check out the airline website for latest information on check-in baggage and hand baggage restrictions. This way you can pack right. Label your entire luggage so that you pick the right bags when they come on the conveyer belt. Overstuffed check in bags should be encased in a luggage belt so that they do not open during the flight. If traveling by train, and especially if it's an overnight journey, remember to secure your bags with locks. If traveling by car, it is not a bad idea to pack some old newspapers or an old bed sheet/picnic sheet and few disposal bags for planned or unplanned picnics en-route or at the destination. Another important thing; before embarking on a long journey, get your car its regular tune up and oil check and perhaps a service. Your car should be able to enjoy the trip as much as you do, and not give up on the way.

Enjoy Your Trip



1. If the airport or train station is your first stop at the destination, and if it's a huge one, you should try to check out the airport or train station layout on their website so that you know the way out when you are there. You should know enough to exit the airport or station and reach the transport that will take you to your hotel. Hotel pickups come in handy here. In any case, if you have a map, that helps too. If you are in your car with printed driving directions, it should be easy for you.

2. The research that you did before the trip should really help you now. If you know about the attractions you want to visit beforehand, you can start soon after checking in. If not, you can chit chat at the front desk and get required information on what activities you can do while there. You can also find out from the locals about good restaurants to eat.

3. Go for adventure activities, sight seeing, nature hikes or simply relax around. Capture all those special moments in your camera. Just make sure you are alert about your money, passports, travel documents and your other belongings. If traveling with kids, be alert about them too! If your toddler tends to wander away on his/her own, you can put a wrist band on her or a card with your contact details in his trousers.

Come Back Home

1. You've had a great trip. Now it's time to go back home. The feeling of the holiday being over and returning to the same routine is not that good, but there's always a next time:)

2. Before checking out, double check that you have not left any belonging in the room (your mobile on the side table, or your charger in the socket?) or the bathroom (your ring or your watch?).

3. If the hotel has a comments/feedback book, do leave your comments or suggestions in it. You may be heard and it may help others, so why not.

4. When back home and after settling in, don't forget to download all the snaps you have taken. Select the good ones and give them for printing. Digital snaps on your computer and print snaps in albums, both are good memories.

5. If you care to or someone else in your house likes to, it is nice to put down memories of your visit in a print or online journal. This is for you to remember and for others to read and take benefit from. After all, maybe someone else's reviews helped you to select your destination and hotel, remember?



Have a safe and fun trip!