

50 THINGS

EVERY INTERNATIONAL TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW

When traveling overseas, there are so many cultural, social and etiquette differences that you really need to know, or you risk looking like a (-gasp-) tourist, or worse, a complete idiot. Seasoned travelers know that it pays to be educated and do your research before leaving the country so you don't offend, embarrass or find yourself in a pickle.

MONEY MATTERS

1. Most countries use credit cards with chip and PIN technology. Most U.S. cards now have a chip, but no PIN. Don't worry, your card can still be used with a signature.
2. When processing your credit card, the merchant should bring the card reader to you. Your card shouldn't need to leave your sight.
3. Many credit cards charge a 3% international transaction fee, even when booking travel with an international company while still at home. Find one that doesn't charge that fee to save \$\$.
4. Don't use traveler's cheques. They are outdated and an unnecessary hassle. Use credit cards instead.
5. ATMs are the best way to get the cash you'll need. Just try to calculate your costs in advance so you don't take too much out or have to pay another fee to get more.
6. Avoid exchange bureaus. They often charge exorbitant fees and give bad exchange rates.
7. Spend loose change before leaving the country because you can't sell it back at any currency exchange desk.
8. Know the currency conversion rate and carry a calculator so you don't get taken advantage of.
9. Haggling is expected in most bazaars and markets around the world. But don't start too low or you'll insult the storekeeper.

BATHROOM ISSUES

10. WC stands for Water Closet and is the acceptable symbol for a bathroom in many countries.
11. Always carry small change in Europe. You need it to use the WC (bathroom) in many countries.
12. When using a street bathroom where you pay with coins in the door, beware that there is a time limit and the door may pop open before you're finished.
13. Always carry your own toilet paper. Some bathrooms don't offer free or any paper.
14. Be prepared to squat! Many non-Western countries use squat toilets and it's definitely a learned skill.
15. Some countries/cities have older plumbing that can't handle TP. If you see a wastebasket next to the toilet, place TP there and not in the toilet.



DINING

16. In some countries (Argentina & Spain, for example), dinner doesn't start until at least 9pm. If you show up before that, you might be the only person in the restaurant.
17. Tipping isn't required or expected in most countries outside the U.S. Rounding up is usually enough. A nice restaurant may warrant 10%.
18. Rest chopsticks on your plate or on a chopstick rest, but never across the bowl.
19. Some Muslim countries have strict alcohol consumption rules. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are completely dry!
20. Hotel breakfasts are often overpriced and underwhelming. If it's not included, grab a croissant and coffee at the corner cafe instead.
21. Be aware of the price of the water you're being served. If it's from a bottle, it's likely not free, and it can be quite overpriced.
22. You shouldn't drink the water unless you're sure it's safe to drink, or you'll risk traveler's stomach!



SAFETY

23. Know how to stay safe on vacation. Be aware of commotion, people bumping into you, beggars hanging around. Pick pockets are smarter and better at what they do than you think.
24. Don't wear your backpack on your back if it's easy to get into and carrying expensive items. It's easy for a thief to unzip a pocket and take something without you noticing.
25. Know how to spot a scam. There are dozens, but they all have the same "stink" of a scam.

TRAVEL RESOURCES

BEST CARRY-ON LUGGAGE CHOICES



PACKING

26. Packing light – only taking a carry-on — will save you from the dreaded “lost luggage” scenario.
27. If you must take a checked bag, make sure you have at least a change of clothes and any necessities, such as medications, stored in your carry on.
28. In Latin America, you should pass food with your right hand and always keep your hands above the table while eating.
29. When you're ready for the bill in a restaurant, you'll have to ask for it.
30. Save space by packing dual-purpose clothes that can be re-worn and mix-and-matched. There's no need to take multiple pairs of shoes and jackets.
31. Wrap wine and liquor bottles in clothes so they don't break in your luggage.
32. Roll your clothes to save space.
33. Do laundry in the sink. The time and energy you'll save not having to lug around baggage is so worth it.
34. Know the airline's baggage policy. Some U.S. carry on bags are too big in Europe. Low cost airlines always have stricter limits. Know before you go.

TRANSPORTATION

- 35. Travel in the off- or shoulder- season to cut down on costs and avoid crowds.
- 36. Use a local airline to book short flights in country. Ryanair or Easy Jet will save you tons of money when flying in Europe.
- 37. Know whether you need an International driver's license to rent a car (like in Italy).
- 38. Always ask for an estimate on the cab fare before getting in. You should know what the expected rate is so you don't get overcharged.
- 39. Only rent a car if it's absolutely necessary. Take the train, bus or walk around cities instead. It offers more culture, opportunity to see the countryside and less hassle: parking, theft and extra costs aren't worth it.
- 40. Know how to drive a stick shift. Manual transmission is standard at rental car agencies almost everywhere you go.
- 41. If you're going to rent a car, you better know how to change a tire!



GENERAL INFO

- 42. Know at least a few words in the language. You should at least know how to say yes, no and thank you in the language.
- 43. Don't walk around with your passport. Keep a copy of the first page with you, and store your passport in the hotel safe (unless it's required by the country that you carry it). Also give a copy of the first page to someone back home, just in case.
- 44. Never point at someone with your index finger. It's rude.
- 45. Know your passport number by heart, in case it gets lost.
- 46. Sign up for Global Entry (or Nexus) to speed through customs when returning to the U.S.
- 47. Sign up for STEP with the U.S. Embassy when traveling abroad. You will be notified of any issues.
- 48. Know how to convert Celsius to Fahrenheit if you want to know what the temperature is. An easy formula: deduct 32, then multiply by 5, then divide by 9
- 49. Learn to go with the flow. Don't get uptight or stressed out when things don't go right or you will ruin what little time you have.
- 50. Cheers! Prost! Živjeli! Learn how to toast in different languages.

Now that you know the 50 things every International traveler should know, you'll be much better prepared to handle yourself in any situation while traveling abroad.

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