

40 Travel Tips That Will Save You Money on Your Next Trip

Sojourn Stories with Sruti

Do you love traveling but want to be budget-conscious? Do you want to save as much money as possible while traveling to your favorite places in the world? Or, are you simply a budget traveler? In any case, here are 40 useful travel tips that will save you loads of money while exploring the world.

Booking a flight and other transport

1. Use airline booking sites that gather flight prices from multiple airlines. My favorite is [Skyscanner](#). It has served me quite well so far.
2. Check for flights early on. I recommend 6 months ahead of time if flying internationally, particularly during peak travel season. Ideally, you should book 4 months ahead of time.
 - a. Not traveling during peak season? You could wait until you are closer to the 2-month mark, but the best deals are still available around 3 months before your travel dates.
 - b. If you feel that the flight prices are high, hold off on booking and review data on third-party sites such as Skyscanner occasionally. That will provide a good idea of how the trends change.
3. Google flights interface provides a **Date grid** that is quite useful. Take a look at alternate days when tickets are cheaper.
4. Here's a solid tip: **Go incognito**. Websites use cookies to monitor your search and I have seen instances where the prices go up if I run multiple searches on specific dates and cities.
5. Fly on a Tuesday or Wednesday. It's cheaper.
6. Booking on a Monday evening or Tuesday has generally been the cheapest. I've found that during the weekend, flight prices across the board turn out to be more expensive. Airlines know that people have more time to check for flights, prices, and routes during the weekend!
7. Avoid peak travel season. Note that peak season will vary for different places. So, get a pulse of when the peak season for your destination is, and avoid it to save money. Instead, go during the shoulder season if you can. It's better for the pocket and there will be fewer crowds.
8. Airline loyalty program is a good thing, but not at an added cost. Hence, my tip is to always check booking sites, instead of using a specific airline only. Then, if the third-party site shows that your preferred airline has the cheapest or similar price, book with them using your mileage account to get the best returns.
9. Flying in and out of different cities is a good way to maximize your time in a new place. That way, you won't need to backtrack to your starting point at the end of the trip. Therefore, pick a **multi-city** option while searching for flights.
 - a. Note an exception though - If you are renting a car to drive to multiple countries in a single trip (eg. a road trip in Europe), try to form a circular itinerary that would

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allow you to return a vehicle to the same country (even if not the same rental place) since the fees associated with one-way drop off are exorbitant (I'm talking over 500 euros!)

10. Fly into a nearby city if flights are cheaper there. For example, while visiting Miami, flying into Fort Lauderdale is almost always cheaper than flying into the Miami airport. Even when you add in the extra cost of taking an Uber or a Lyft, it is still less expensive overall. So, check your options.
11. Check if two one-way tickets are cheaper than a round trip. Seriously, it happens. A recent example was when I was looking for flights from San Francisco to Mexico City. The best option was to fly with United Airlines both ways. I found that by booking two separate one-way tickets, I saved over \$50 per person. Crazy, right?

Speaking of San Francisco, if you have it on your travel radar, [take a look at this post](#) I created on how to spend 24 splendid hours in SF!

12. Keep an eye out for when airlines offer discounted deals. For instance, Southwest Airlines in the US, offers deeply discounted deals a few times a year. That is the best time to scoop up a trip at a low price!
13. Choose free stopover flights to see more places at no added cost. Some airlines like Icelandic, Turkish, and Emirates allow you to add a stopover for multiple days without any additional cost to the ticket price in their country. That's how I was able to take a 3-day stopover in Dubai while traveling to [India](#)!

Booking a hotel

14. Use a third party for booking accommodation like [Booking](#). They typically have excellent reward systems. You can use different filters to find a room to your liking and also read reviews from previous patrons.
15. However, before booking any hotel that you shortlisted on booking.com, do a quick Google search to see if there are other sites offering better deals for the same hotel.
16. Alternatively, use hotel points when possible if you are loyal to a hotel chain.
17. Some hotels may sound more tempting than others due to their free breakfast offering. However, I have realized that an included breakfast can sometimes be more hassle than convenience. And expensive, since hotels typically price that into the room charge. And with specific timings for breakfast, you could end up being time-boxed when you don't want to be. For instance, if you like to start your day early before the crowds descend, the breakfast timing would be inconvenient for you.
18. If you must have breakfast in your hotel, pick the ones that are centrally located. That way, you can grab breakfast as soon as they open, and be on your way to explore without spending too much time traveling there.
19. Check Airbnb and other local host stays like Vrbo as an alternative to hotels.

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20. Use limited-time credit card offers to pay for your hotel. Typically, my Capital One offers include generous cash back at sites such as booking.com, hotels.com, etc. Sometimes, up to 9%!

Before the trip

21. Generally, I don't endorse travel credit cards due to steep annual fees, but make sure to use credit cards that reward travel-related purchases with generous points and cash back.
22. Traveling to a touristy city? Check for city cards like [Roma Pass](#) for European cities that allow you to visit multiple major sites for a discounted fare. However, note that this is useful only if you are already planning on visiting most of the sites. So, do your homework and compare costs.
23. In a similar vein, travel/transportation cards are useful too. First, calculate how many times on average you plan on using public transit. Then, check if buying that card is more cost-effective than simply purchasing an individual ticket each time. For instance, I recommend purchasing the [Clipper card](#) when exploring San Francisco. It gives you a discount for every trip on BART, with only a nominal, one-time fee.
24. This is an obvious one but use public transportation as much as you can. Research before you travel whether it is easy and safe to use public transit.
25. Book key experiences that are likely to sell out, ahead of time. For the rest, you may get a better deal if you book on-site. For example, when I was traveling in Dubai, I got a crazy good price to rent a boat for a private 2-hour tour of the Dubai Harbor with our hotel. Similar tours on Viator and Tripadvisor were about twice the price!
26. For multi-day stays, grab breakfast items (if no breakfast is provided in the hotel) and stock up on day 1. A simple loaf of bread and some cheese will be helpful to keep the hunger pangs away until lunchtime. That way, you can start sightseeing easily in the morning. Your best budget-friendly bet is to shop for groceries at local markets. They have the best food and the best prices.
27. Stay further away from the heart of cities to save money. But stay close to public transportation. An ideal location is to stay one stop away from a major site. That way, you can reach quickly but are far enough away to get lower hotel prices, and also, use the public transit card savings (from point 16 above).
28. This tip is a calculated risk. Wait for last-minute hotel deals. Oftentimes, they can be seriously discounted.
29. As you build your itinerary, frame it such that you stay at expensive locations, cities, and thereby, hotels, during the weekdays. Opt for the less expensive locations during the weekend. That's because hotels are generally priced higher during weekends.
30. Nail down your packing list. This saves you from buying things at your destination at steeper prices.

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As you start putting together your packing list, make sure to properly parse out what items you need to pack in your carry-on luggage and those that belong in your check-in. Use [this post as a guide](#) to what you should carry in your carry-on luggage, and items that should not be added to your carry-on bag!

31. Now, let's tackle luggage on flights. It is usually cheaper to buy a check-in bag between 2 people than it is to get a higher-tier ticket that includes a piece of check-in luggage for free. We have used this tactic so many times and the difference in fare has been substantial.
32. **Your workplace may have good offers for personal travel!** Check for workplace offers for rental car deals and coupons for various experiences. In fact, some workplaces also offer reward points that can be exchanged for experiences.
33. Renting a car can be cheaper than public transportation if traveling as a family or two sets of couples. Obviously, it is a lot more convenient too.
With that being said, beware of itineraries that would require you to pick a car from one country and drop in another. They charge a steep fee for dropping off in another country.
34. In case you need a visa, do not book with a third-party site. Just go through the visa process yourself. Since I hold an Indian passport, I need to get visas more often than I'd like. Over time, I've realized that it is fairly easy to get a visa myself, even though rummaging around on a consulate website to find the requirements can be a pain at times.

During the trip

35. Sign up for free walking tours on city visits. They are great, and free (obviously).
36. Eat away from touristy spots. Touristy spots = heavy traffic = highly jacked-up food prices. Go 3-5 blocks away. Or better yet, ask your host for recommendations. Don't rely on Yelp outside North America. Other countries do not use this app as much and you will likely get skewed results from tourists rating these restaurants.
37. In European cities, avoid a sit-down lunch and instead take yours to go. Restaurants typically set their prices for to-go food a lot cheaper than sit-down service.
Pro tip: Then, go and plant yourself in a nice square and eat while people watching and enjoying the surroundings. The surroundings are typically amazing in a city square.
38. Try local cuisine and local foods. They are better value for money.
39. Avoid expensive souvenirs. The best souvenir is something small and light like a magnet. Or your photos and videos which will undoubtedly look incredible adorning your wall. For special friends, consider getting something edible if you must.
40. Check fares of taxis vs Uber. In [Punta Arenas](#), an Uber was cheaper than a taxi. In Dubai, an Uber was more expensive than a taxi.