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# Introduction

Are you looking to plan a trip, but aren't sure how to get started?

Worried that you'll make a huge mistake that'll cost you?

Planning a trip can certainly be a daunting task for inexperienced travelers, but it doesn't have to be so difficult. This special report highlights the most common mistakes made by new travelers so you can easily avoid them.

In addition, we'll give you some helpful tips and travel "hacks" that will help you save time and money so you can enjoy an adventure of a lifetime without sweating the small stuff.

Planning your trip should be fun and exciting! Are you ready to get started?

Let's begin!

# Mistake #1: Failing to Plan

One of the most common mistakes that new travelers make is failing to research and plan the most important aspects of their upcoming trip.

Last minute flights, changes in hotel reservations and not creating a reasonable itinerary and schedule can cost you a lot of money, but can also leave you very disappointed in the event that hotels, restaurants and attractions are sold out or booked solid.

When it comes to planning your trip, you'll want to begin as soon as possible.

This includes:

## **Creating a Rough Itinerary**

Decide what is most important to you during your travels. What landmarks or attractions are a must-visit? You'll likely need to

sacrifice a few of the places you want to visit if you hope to stay within budget and time frame but it's important to at least come up with a list of top priorities so you can plan accordingly.

### **Book Flights Early**

The earlier you book flights, the lower your costs will be and the more options will be available to you. You'll also want to make sure you leave enough time in between any connecting flights.

### **Book Hotel Rooms**

Book your hotel rooms as soon as you have decided on your destination, even if only tentatively. That way you can rest assured that you have a place to stay while you continue researching alternative lower-cost hotel chains.

### **Book Restaurants**

You'll want to choose at least a couple of restaurants and make advanced reservations, especially if you plan to visit busy tourist areas or want to experience a popular restaurant. Use websites

like [OpenTable.com](https://www.opentable.com) to manage all your reservations.

### **Book Tickets to Attractions**

Once you've solidified your schedule, you'll want to secure tickets to the main attractions. Usually you'll save money by ordering online and printing off tickets prior to leaving for your trip.

While you may get lucky and score yourself a few last minute deals, typically when it comes to travel, the more in advance you plan, the more money you'll save.

This is especially true with flights and hotel reservations. One of the easiest ways to book tentative hotel rooms while you search for the best bargains is to use a website like

<https://www.booking.com>

[Booking.com](https://www.booking.com) also has an app which makes it easy to scout for lower-priced hotel rates while booking a room for the time being, just so you aren't stuck.

Just make sure the hotels you book allow for last-minute cancellations. You may pay a slightly higher rate for the ability to cancel but you'll still save money by avoiding penalty fees.

[Expedia.com](https://www.expedia.com) is another great resource for uncovering hot deals on all aspects relating to travel, including bundle deals on flights, hotels and car rentals. They also accept PayPal as well as all major credit cards, providing you the flexibility of paying upfront or at the time of travel.

Regardless of what resource you decide to use, you'll want to keep an eye out for hidden costs.

While many travel websites may seem to offer you the best deal, if you dig deeper you'll often find additional fees that aren't part of the upfront total, including resort fees, taxes and service charges. Quite often, once you add all those fees up you're better off going directly with the airline or hotel chain.

Also, keep an eye out for low-cost flights that seem too good to be true.

- Do they offer any luggage allowance?
- Are there multiple layover's that could make it difficult to reach your destination?

*Here are a few resources to help you get started:*

Kayak

Search hundreds of travel sites at once.

<https://www.Kayak.com>

Google Flights

<https://google.com/flights>

Priceline

[Priceline.com](https://Priceline.com)

# Mistake #2: Outdated Information

You'll want to make sure you do your homework on country entry requirements for the places you plan to visit. The last thing you need is for your trip to be ruined because you don't have the right documentation to be allowed entry.

In addition, most countries require that your passport be valid for at least **six months after arrival**, so make sure you check the expiration date well in advance and renew it ahead of time, if necessary.

Further, some countries require verification that you've received immunization prior to allowing you entry, such as Africa and the Indian Ocean, both of which will ask for proof that you've been vaccinated against yellow fever.

Tip: Make copies of all important travel documents in the event you lose your original copies. Print these hard copies out and keep a copy on you at all times.

You should also consider emailing a copy to yourself and placing all of these documents into a remote folder like Drop Box, found at: <https://www.DropBox.com>, that you can easily access from anywhere.

*This includes:*

- Passports
- Flight Tickets
- Hotel Reservations
- Visas
- Rental Car Reservations
- Tour bookings
- Driver's License
- Credit Cards

# Mistake #3: Unsecured Valuables

It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of being somewhere new and not pay attention to your surroundings, but if you want to keep your valuables safe and your money in your pocket, it's important that you learn to always be cautious.

To start, never leave your valuables unsecured. This means not placing your wallet in your back pocket or in unsecured backpacks where a pickpocket could easily swipe your belongings without you even noticing.

Keep your backpack in front of you, or your bag strapped across your chest. Also, consider purchasing a bag that includes a button rather than just a zipper as it will be harder for someone to open without you noticing.

You also want to avoid using public Wi-Fi for financial transactions.

This includes making online payments, sending someone money through a bank wire or transfer or even entering any financial-based passwords.

# Mistake #4: Overpacking

Planning ahead will make it easy to avoid one of the most common mistakes and that's over packing!

When we're new to traveling, it's easy to worry that you might leave something important behind, or forget something that you can't easily purchase in foreign countries.

*What happens next?*

We arrive at the airport with either overweight bags or more bags than we are permitted with our ticket and are forced to pay extra to check all that extra luggage.

But that's not the worst of it.

Now you'll need to drag around multiple suitcases during your

travel while likely hiring larger taxi or Uber's just to fit it all!

Don't make such a rookie travel mistake. Instead, pay careful thought to every item you pack in your suitcase, making sure that it's *really* that important.

*Here are a few things to help you get started:*

- Purchase travel-size bottles for shampoo, soap and creams. You can get these from most drug stores.
- Roll your clothing. Don't fold it. Not only will rolling help you save space but quite often it will help you avoid wrinkles.
- Pack adaptable clothes. Plan outfits carefully, packing items that are versatile and can be worn with other items.
- Create a packing check-list ahead of time and do your best to stick to it! Break your list down into categories such as:

clothing, toiletries, electronics, personal items and documents.

- Consider Compression Bags: These will save you a ton of space and free up room in your suitcase.

# Mistake #4: Currency

When it comes to accessing local currency, and making sure you are able to reduce your bank and international transaction fees, you'll want to consider the most commonly used credit cards by seasoned travelers.

This includes:

## **American Express Platinum Edge Card**

This card offers:

- No international ATM withdrawal fees
- No currency conversion fees
- No fees on cash advances

Plus, they also offer you reward points for hotels and airlines.

The Charles Schwab Checking Account is also one of the most widely used cards by pro travelers because of its no ATM fees, no

fees on foreign currency exchanges and no account minimums or monthly service fees.

As for whether you should buy foreign currency before your trip?

**Travel expert, Rick Steves says:**

*“Resist the urge to buy foreign currency before you travel. Most new travelers feel they must have Euros or British pounds in their pocket before they step off the plane. The truth is, they’ll pay far more in exchange rates than if they simply withdraw money from local ATM’s.”*

Further, he recommends avoiding exchanging money in Europe, claiming that you can lose as much as 15 percent. Instead, withdraw money from ATM’s as needed and plan your cash withdrawals wisely.

And finally, leave your traveler's checks at home. Very few places accept them anymore.

**Tip:** Make sure you let your bank know about your travel plans so that your credit or debit card isn't locked due to suspicious activity or potential fraud.

# Mistake #5: Insurance

One of the most overlooked aspects of traveling is failing to purchase travel insurance. People think “I’m healthy. Why do I need travel insurance? I’ll save a few bucks by not buying it.”

The truth is, travel insurance goes beyond medical protection. It can cover cancelled flights, issues with your hotel, or in the event someone gets sick and you have no choice but to cancel your trip last minute.

You never know what can happen before your departure and unfortunately, most general health and medical plans don’t cover you when you’re out of the country.

As for what travel insurance is best for you, it depends on your particular needs, as well as whether you want a lower deductible.

One of the most often used travel insurance companies is found at: <https://www.worldnomads.com>

World Nomads lets you purchase travel insurance online from anywhere in the world, even if you're already traveling!

*Here are a few other options:*

<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>

<https://www.squaremouth.com/>

And here are a few things to consider when choosing your plan:

- Does the contract require written submission when reporting an incident or do they accept electronic claims?
- What is the amount of the premium and can you upgrade/downgrade if you choose?

- What isn't covered in the policy? Does it include high-risk countries or specific adventure sports and activities?
- What is the extent of the coverage? Does it include only medical expenses or other possible costs?
- Does it include any pre-existing medical conditions?

Those are just a few things to think about when evaluating travel insurance packages. Be vigilant in understanding what you're paying for and how you're protected.

# Mistake #6: On The Go

These days, most everyone travels with a smartphone, as well as other gadgets to stay connected.

If this sounds like you, you'll want to consider the following when you travel:

- Check whether free Wi-Fi is available at your hotel.
- Consider unlocking your smartphone so you can use local SIM cards to save money.
- Research data plan and SIM card options based on your destination.
- Purchase an international travel plug adapter so you can charge all your gadgets, including phone and laptop.

# Mistake #7: Failing to Set a Budget

If one of the top mistakes new travelers make is failing to plan early, a close second is not setting a reasonable budget.

Once you have decided on your destination and a rough timeline as to when you plan to travel, it's time to set a budget. You'll want to start by writing down all the current expenses associated with your upcoming travel. This includes estimations for hotel charges, rental cars, flights, attractions, travel and food.

That way, not only will you be able to create an overview of what to expect (and therefore, fewer surprises when it comes time to pay up!), but you'll be able to divide that budget by the number of months you have from now until the time you travel so you can set aside money each month that can go towards your trip.

For example, if you estimate that you will need \$2,000 for your trip that takes place in about 6 months, you'd only need to save about \$11 a day to be able to afford that trip!

Setting a budget well in advance makes it easier for you to strategize ways to cut costs, save money and get prepared.

For example, you could get a travels reward credit card and plan to use it regularly in the months prior to your trip so that you can then cash those points in towards free flights or hotel stays.

Most hotel chains also offer free reward cards through loyalty programs that offer free perks, early check-in options and more.

# Mistake #8: Comfort Zone

If you're the type of person who likes to stick to a schedule as well as stay within a set region or area during your travels, you'll miss out on some great opportunities to learn about culture and how the locals *really* live.

Most travel experts will tell you to "get lost on purpose". They explain that if you want to learn about how real people live and work, you need to venture outside of your comfort zones (and the busier tourist areas/traps).

Not only will you broaden your horizons, but you'll save money as most venues and restaurants outside of the bustling tourist areas will offer better pricing.

So, try to set aside a day where all you do is explore! Keep an

open mind and let yourself get lost in the culture and customs of the places you're visiting!

# Mistake #9: Overdoing It

It's easy to get carried away with everything you plan to see and do, especially if this is one of your first major trips. Chances are, you'll also want to plan every detail of your trip down to the minute in the hopes of cramming everything in while staying on schedule.

The truth is, even the best laid plans can fall apart, especially when traveling to new countries.

While we always recommend creating an itinerary (see page 6), it's also important to remember to slow down and enjoy the experience. Don't think of this as the one and only trip you'll ever take. Instead, stay in the moment and minimize stress by not trying to do too much on one trip.

Getting yourself stressed out defeats the purpose of a relaxing and memorable vacation.

Instead, leave enough room in your schedule for off-the-beaten-track adventures! You never know what you may encounter during your travels and you wouldn't want to miss out on an opportunity to experience something new just because you overbooked yourself and are short on time.

You also want to make sure you have extra time for when things go wrong, such as traffic jams, delayed flights, or other issues out of your control.

# Mistake #10: Not Confirming

You may think you've done everything possible to plan the perfect trip. You've outlined an itinerary, you've set a budget, you've saved for your trip and you've spent time carefully packing.

You're ready to go!

Yet one huge mistake that new travelers often make is failing to confirm reservations. This includes flights, hotels and even attractions, in case weather has caused changes to occur, or flights have been delayed.

Double-check that if any of your flights have been delayed or rescheduled, that they still align with any connecting flights you have booked.

You also want to double-check any travel documents, including your passport, visa (if required), and other identification.

And finally, make sure your credit cards aren't set to expire shortly before or during your trip!

**Tip:** Make sure you also check in before your flight! This will not only save you time but you'll be able to confirm that your flight is scheduled to depart on time. It will also give you the opportunity to select your seats, often free of charge.

# Final Words

Planning the perfect trip is easier than you might have thought but it requires careful thought. From packing to booking flights and making reservations, you want to keep notes of everything to do with your travel plans and then confirm prior to departure.

*Here's a quick checklist of all we've covered:*

- Create an itinerary, prioritizing the must-see attractions.
- Spend some time researching hotels, including the distance to/from the places where you'll spend most your time. Costs of Uber or taxis can add up.
- Review flight costs, looking for discounts on websites like RetailMeNot.com to save a few dollars.

- Double-check and confirm all of your bookings and reservations prior to departure.
- Check into your flight 24 hours in advance in order to confirm flights and also save time at the airport.
- Pack carefully, rolling items when possible and using travel-size bottles to save space.
- Purchase travel insurance prior to departure.
- Be aware of your surroundings and keep your valuables safe.
- And most importantly, have fun!

# Resources

Here's a list of resources mentioned throughout this special guide:

DropBox

>> <https://www.DropBox.com>

Fantastic tool for storing important documents and information that you can retrieve from anywhere you have an Internet connection.

Google Flights, Kayak & Priceline

>> <https://google.com/flights>

>> <https://kayak.com>

>> <https://www.PriceLine.com>

Travel Insurance

>> <https://www.WorldNomads.com>

>> <https://www.insuremytrip.com/>

>> <https://www.squaremouth.com/>