

# The rules of travel change so fast.

You finally master using a booking engine only to discover that you should be doing a meta-search. You get comfortable with airport kiosks and then realize it's smarter to print boarding passes at home. If you feel like you haven't been keeping up, don't worry: It's our job to do it for you. We've prepared a comprehensive look at everything we know about how to find a deal, how to avoid waiting in lines, how to pack, and more. In other words...

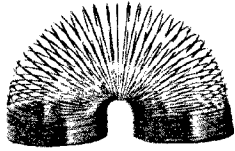


# How to Travel Now

# Trip Planning

## The best advice is lots of advice

Clip any newspaper and magazine articles. E-mail friends, friends of friends, and even like-minded strangers (via message boards) for advice. Ask for tips from bloggers who specialize in destinations. Check out user-review websites like TripAdvisor. Don't rely on any single source, even *Budget Travel*; look for a consensus.



## Flexibility pays off

When it comes to booking a flight, being flexible with dates used to mean doing a lot of data entry. Flexible-date searches at Travelocity, Kayak, and many airline sites now make it a snap to see how much you'll save by changing your dates.

## Think outside the hotel-room box

Renting a house, condo, or apartment—or swapping homes—may be better, especially for groups. The Internet has made locating such non-hotel options a million times easier. Three vacation-rental websites: VRBO.com, HomeAway.com, VillasIntl.com. Three home-swapping websites: HomeExchange.com, HomeLink.org, Intervac.com.



## Someone has to pay the tennis pro's salary

When you stay at a hotel, you're essentially paying for all the services offered—gym, water sports, concierge, tennis courts—even if you never use them. So figure out what's important to you, and what you can do without.



**Pick the right guidebook** Browse to check that the research isn't stale and that you trust the writer's sensibility. Time Out is reliable for big cities, and Lonely Planet is still best for off-the-grid trips.

## Call a travel agent when you're...

Planning a complicated trip, traveling with a large group, going on a cruise, hoping for advice on the destination. Always ask: Has the agent been there?

## Scout from above

Use Google Earth's cool satellite images to gauge the exact distance between the hotel you're considering and the beach, a highway, the Eiffel Tower, the subway, Chernobyl....

## The best price is out there somewhere

And there's no one simple way to track it down. Start with meta-search engines like Kayak and SideStep, which scour multiple sites for flights, hotels, cruises, and car rentals. Orbitz, Travelocity, and Expedia are good for getting a feel for what's out there—though they often don't search all airlines, and they tack on service fees.



Sniff Sniff

## Keep hunting

Think like a bloodhound: Prices for car rentals and hotels fluctuate, so never give up sniffing out a better deal. When you locate one, snap it up—and cancel the old reservation. Just make sure the cancellation policy won't bite you in the rear.

## Call hotels directly

Certain special rates are only sold over the phone; others are only sold online. Note: Cancellation policies for these can be strict.

## Why packages can be major bargains

To fill rooms and seats, hotels and airlines will resort to rock-bottom prices. For obvious reasons, they don't like to publicize these rates, so they sell a certain number of rooms or seats to companies that bundle them in packages. That way, no one knows exactly what the airfare or hotel alone costs. Here are a few things to bear in mind before you buy a package: 1. The only way to know if it's a deal is to see what it costs to book separately. 2. Don't trust the packager's hotel description or star rating; research the hotel on your own. If you don't like the hotel being offered, you can usually upgrade. 3. Ask about the flight's times, connections, airline, and change and cancellation policies. 4. Extra nights are often available at a ridiculously low rate.

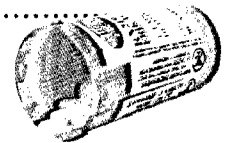
## Know thy neighbors

For cruises, tours, and other group experiences, ask who'll be joining you—how mature they are or aren't, whether everyone will already know each other, and so on. For hotels and resorts, make sure there's not a wedding or a convention during your dates.

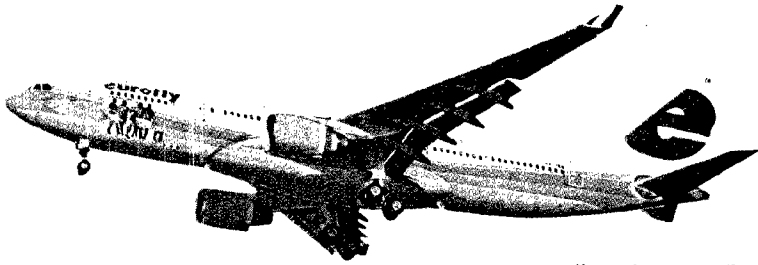
For cruises, check out CruiseCritic.com.



**Buy drugs** Get and fill prescriptions for sleeping pills and medicine for traveler's diarrhea. At some point in your travels, you'll be extremely relieved that you did.



Clockwise from middle left: Budget Travel (2); Greg Casp/Cas/Cas; Dag Sandberg/Cas/Cas; Budget Travel; Ryan McKay/Cas/Cas; Images



**Silverjet! Eurofly! Zoom!**

It seems like there's a new airline every day, and because they don't show up in booking engines, figuring out who flies where is a headache. Bookmark DoHop.com—it lists which carriers serve an area.

**Third-party bookers often get second-class treatment**

Wrong as it is, hotels are nicer to guests who seek them out than to those who come via a third-party booking engine. Whenever possible, book directly. If you see a low rate elsewhere, ask the hotel to match it. Hotels will almost always undercut any middleman—which isn't all that difficult, when you consider that booking engines tack on fees.

**In case of emergency**

Old rule: Bring a photocopy of your passport with you. New rule: Scan your passport and e-mail it (and your itinerary) to yourself and to someone you trust back home.

**So much for Tuesday after midnight**

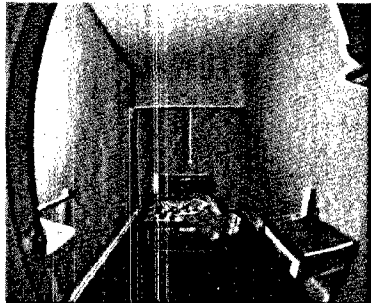
For years, many "travel experts" have theorized that some or other week-night was when airlines released fantastic deals, but that's hogwash.

**"Garden-view" equals parking lot**

Words can lose their meaning (if they ever had much of one in the first place), and you can't assume your definition is the same as someone else's. A few words and phrases you should cast a gimlet eye on: *boutique* (when describing hotels), *centrally located*, *charming*, *chic*, *garden-view*, *low-fare* (for airlines), *luxury*, *quaint*, *recently renovated*, *romantic*, *stylish*, *suite*, *villa*, *walking distance*.

Plus: Hotel rating systems aren't worth a whole lot. What makes a hotel four-star versus three-star can be something as silly as a phone in the bathroom.

**The proof is in the picture** If a hotel or condo doesn't post photos on its site, ask for images to be e-mailed. But don't assume photos are entirely trustworthy.



Images shot with fish-eye lenses make rooms seem bigger than they are.



For all you know, this photograph was taken sometime back in 1988.



What you don't see: the construction site that's just outside the frame.



This is a room at the hotel—but it's far better than the one you reserved.

Clockwise from top: Josh May; William Whitehurst/Corbis; CSA; Platon/C/Getty Images; Alex Freund/Getty Images; Mt. Harris/Getty Images; Jupiter Images; Matt Henry Gunther/Getty Images

# Loyalty Programs



**The royal treatment**

Members of loyalty programs get better service, fewer hassles, less paperwork, and great freebies and perks. So before you reserve anything (hotel, airline, car rental, etc.), join the loyalty club, even if you're only planning on doing business with the company a single time.



**Don't be a hoarder**

The value of frequent-flier miles is in decline. Don't sit on them hoping that someday you're going to trade them in for a round-the-world ticket. Use them ASAP to get upgrades, free tickets, even (ahem) magazine subscriptions. Some airlines—such as Continental and American—have online calendars that make it fairly easy to see when miles can be exchanged for free flights and upgrades.

**Sell your mother for 10,000 miles**

More and more airlines (including United and US Airways) are insisting you have "activity" in your account every 18 months or it'll be closed. Amass miles any way you feel comfortable: credit cards, car rentals, hotel stays, purchases from partner companies, whatever.

**Airlines simply cannot be trusted**

Don't assume that miles will be added to your account automatically. The burden of making sure you get credited is entirely on you. Check your balance online, and if the miles fail to show up within a week after you've flown, contact the airline reward program.

# Booking



## Are you comparing apples to apples?

Fees and taxes can raise prices dramatically, so find out if they're included in any price you're quoted. Booking engines keep travelers in the dark by bundling their taxes and fees or by waiting until late in the booking process to show them, and some charge more than others.

## Get a trigger price

Do the necessary research so you'll know a good deal when you see one. What do we mean by "necessary research"? Start by taking a look at Farecast.com, a newish website with reams of historical airfare data, and then do your shopping around. Airfares change like *that*, and you have to be ready to book at a moment's notice—or the fare will disappear.

## Beware any checked boxes

Some travel sites will automatically add extras that you might not want—most notoriously, travel insurance. Rail Europe, for example, tacks on a \$10 per-ticket insurance fee, which online customers pay unless they notice the pre-checked box and opt out. If you see a checked box on a website, look closely for the fine print.



## Delete your cookies

Websites put cookies on your computer that let them know you've been there (which is how they remember your name). Travel sites, however, have used them to avoid showing you the same price every time you visit. Delete your cookies and they'll treat you like a new customer. How you delete them depends on your computer and browser, but the option is usually available under the "Tools" or "Preferences" menu of Explorer, Safari, and Firefox. Some cookies serve a useful purpose, so delete only the ones associated with the booking engine.



**It's your honeymoon!** And that's super. But if you say so when you're booking a trip, you'll get charged a higher price (it's just like with weddings, when flowers cost more than they usually do). The time to announce your honeymooning status is when you arrive at the airport. Same goes for a major anniversary or any other special trip.

## Bid low, score big

While Priceline is now a full-fledged booking engine, it's most valuable for its bidding system. We like it for hotels in cities, but be wary of two-star hotels and below, and research neighborhoods in advance. BiddingForTravel.com has examples of successful bids. The law of supply and demand means you'll do better at business hotels on weekends, at resort towns on weekdays, and anywhere off-season.

## Be receptive

Subscribe to e-newsletters from airlines, hotels, and travel sites. The best deals are last-minute, and to get them you need to hear about them immediately.

## Sales are contagious

When an airline slashes fares, competitors that fly the same route tend to follow suit. So if a carrier doesn't have availability, or the times or connections are less than ideal, scope out its competitors.

## Psst! Secret fares you'll never see at booking engines

Tour operators that book packages with charter flights (such as Vacation Express, Funjet, and Apple Vacations) also sell just the flights—for far cheaper than regularly scheduled ones. The potential downside is that charter flights usually go once a week, so if you miss your flight or the plane conks out, you're stuck. Consolidators, which sell discounted fares on regular airlines, are another resource. The best ones, like 1800FlyEurope.com and India specialist Hari World.com, work out deals with the airlines that fly to a certain area.



## We now live in a grasshopper's world

Remember the fable of the anal-retentive ant and the seize-the-day grasshopper? These days, the grasshopper wins. There's rarely need to book a trip more than two months out. In fact, you often pay more. The few exceptions when you should reserve well ahead: busy times (e.g., holidays), trips for large groups, exotic destinations with few flights, when it's a special event like a wedding (and you have no flexibility).

## Confirm all of your reservations

It's a particularly good idea with hotels and car rentals during peak travel periods, when they're more likely to overbook and hand your room or car over to someone else.

## And confirm your cancellations, too

Get a confirmation number or, even better, a confirmation e-mail. If you don't have proof in writing, you're facing an uphill battle if the charge eventually shows up on your credit-card bill.



## Moron alert!

If you call a company and the person who answers sounds like an idiot or a jerk, hang up before saying your name. Call back later. (To find out which keys to press to reach an operator at hundreds of companies, go to [GetHuman.com](http://GetHuman.com).)



## Maximize your cell phone

Turn it into an address book, with contact info for airlines, hotels, car-rental companies, and your car and health insurers. (Get a local phone number, too, in case the toll-free one won't work overseas.) And if you use your cell to store loyalty-program account info, you can toss those membership cards.

Clockwise from top left: Evans Caglage/Corbis (2); Mark Weiss/Getty Images; Jupiter Images; UK Limited/Corbis; Gary Wainman/Getty Images; Robin Lyne Gibson/Getty Images

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**Welcome to our country! Now go home** If you don't have enough blank pages in your passport, or if it expires in six months or less, some countries won't let you in.



(Not sure if you need a visa? See [state.gov/travel](http://state.gov/travel).)

In the U.S., the rule is that you now also need to have a passport if you're entering the country by air from Mexico, Canada, the non-U.S. Caribbean, the Bahamas, or Bermuda. People arriving by cruise ship may also require a passport as early as January 1, 2008.

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**Why a hotel room is kind of like a rug**

Few price quotes are non-negotiable anymore—that goes for a rug in India or a hotel room anywhere. Don't accept the first rate you see; ask if there are unadvertised specials, or if the hotel can do better. Play up whatever you bring to the table—you're with a group, for example, or you visit often. Instead of a lower rate, you may end up with free parking or an upgrade. Just make sure the person you're wooing is in a position to deliver.

**One word: plastic**

Pay for all bookings with a credit card, so you'll be protected in the event the airline or tour operator goes out of business.

**Without evidence, you have no case**

Bring a copy of whatever is included in your rate. Otherwise the hotel might, say, charge you for breakfast, or the car-rental agency could try to give you a compact instead of a minivan. They'll find it a lot harder to argue if you have it on paper.

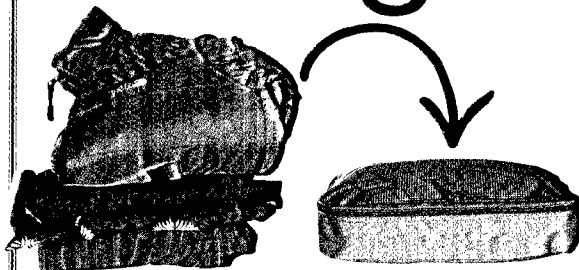
**A few thoughts on travel insurance**

If all you have reserved are flights and hotels, insurance generally isn't worth it: You can rebook a flight and only suffer a \$100-per-ticket (or so) fee, and hotels rarely have strict cancellation policies. But if you're headed on a cruise or a once-in-a-lifetime adventure, such as a safari, insurance looks better and better, because tour operators and cruise lines (which are less likely to get any last-minute bookings) tend to penalize those people who cancel. You should also consider buying travel insurance when you think the odds are decent that you won't be able to take the trip for one reason or another. Just make sure you understand up front exactly what is and isn't covered, which situations allow you to cancel, and what the cancellation time frame is.

**What about when disaster strikes?**

Some people believe they should get insurance in case there's a terrorist attack or natural disaster. Recent history has shown, however, that travel companies are incredibly sensitive when such events occur, and they almost always drop their usual restrictions and allow their customers to rebook or cancel without penalty. Of course, there's no guarantee that this will always be the case.

**Packing**



**Pack as little as possible**

Your goal is to never check bags (more on that in a minute). That means packing light—even if it means doing laundry at your destination—and cramming your belongings into as small a space as possible (those compressible mesh bags, shown above, are a godsend). Most airlines charge for bags over 50 pounds, and some charge for far less, or for checking bags at all; Spirit Airlines just began charging \$5 to \$10 for every checked bag. If your bag is over 50 pounds and the airline allows two checked bags per person, simply pack in two smaller pieces of luggage instead.

**Sure beats ironing**

By now we all know to roll our clothes as a way to best utilize space and avoid wrinkles (it's better than folding). As for the clothes that won't handle rolling well: Layer them inside plastic dry-cleaning bags—friction is what causes wrinkling, and the plastic is friction-free. Hang them upon arrival.

**FedEx it yourself**

There are companies that will ship your luggage (or your skis or your golf gear...) so you don't have to schlep them to and from airports. Here's the thing: Most simply ship via Federal Express or a similar service. You'll save half—or even more—by going directly to FedEx.



**WWMD: What would Martha do?**

Rather than racking your brain to remember what you take every time you go away, create a master list on your computer of the items you always pack; then do a "save as" and customize copies for different kinds of trips (beach, city, skiing). Also make a list of the stuff you have to do at home before leaving on a trip, such as putting a hold on the newspaper and lowering the thermostat.



**Connections are a drag**

Whenever possible, fly nonstop ("direct" flights may in fact make a stop on their way to the final destination), and depart early in the day, before delays have a chance to bungle schedules. In winter, you should avoid hubs such as Chicago, Denver, Minneapolis, and New York; these airports are likely to experience weather-related delays.



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**It's a germy world** Go out and buy a big box of antibacterial wipes in travel-size packets, and then put some in your luggage and some in the trunk of your car. (Or remember to never touch the remote control in your hotel room.)

From top: Budget Travel (2); Amy Sussman/Getty Images; Reuters/Corbis



# Lodging

**Incentivize!** If something is important to you, make it important to someone else. In other words, don't be afraid to try bribery—at least when it comes to getting upgrades from front-desk clerks and special treatment from maître d's. (Do not attempt this with cops and border agents.) Think of it as gambling: Twenty bucks could have a huge payoff.



## Upscale hotels charge for just about everything

Telephone calls, Internet, breakfast, sometimes the gym.... Most of their guests are traveling on expense accounts and don't put up a fuss. But mid-range hotels tend to include that stuff for free. When you're not sure, ask before it's too late.

## Take a look at the mid-range chains

Many of them—including Holiday Inn Express, Four Points by Sheraton, Courtyard by Marriott, and Hampton Inn—have been building new properties like crazy, with more style than you'd expect. A brand, as they prefer to be known, can be a marvelous thing, particularly in cities.

## See that pretty bowl of apples?

Grab one, if not for now then for later; same with coffee near the front desk and bottles of water at the fitness center. Ultimately, the cost of that stuff is in your room rate. You're paying for it whether you take it or someone else does. Helping yourself to more than a single serving at a time, however, is tacky.

## Room service is a total rip-off

Which would be fine if the food were better, or even warm. When you want to mellow out in your room, look in the phone book and get a pizza delivered.

## The concierge has a vested interest

Well, not every single one, but how can you tell? Assume the worst: They may have hidden motives to recommend one place over another. In a pinch, ask other hotel workers (bartenders, waiters, etc.) for advice on where locals eat or hang out.

## Valet parking is a last resort

A nearby parking lot will be 50 percent cheaper.

## Safe vs. sorry

Use the hotel safe—unless, of course, you're the kind of person who prefers to learn things the hard way.

## Don't so much as touch the minibar

Everything in it is overpriced. Plus, the modern minibar has sensors that know when you remove something. Putting that Johnnie Walker mini back doesn't mean you'll automatically get credited. You'll have to prove that you didn't drink it.

## The bedspread is toxic

Anyone who has ever seen a reporter wield a black light on the local TV news knows that the hotel bedspread is teeming with creepy-crawlies. Remove it at once and place it in a corner of the room. Also, if you spot a bedbug bite or suspect the place is infested, run—not just from the room, but from the building. The last thing you want is to bring bedbugs home with you.

# Cruises

## Go fishing for deals

Consolidators such as CruisesOnly.com, CruiseStar.com, and Cruise411.com basically act as travel agents, but they sell cruises at steeper discounts than are found elsewhere. Recently, cruise lines have prevented these brokers from advertising their best offers—but that doesn't mean they don't have 'em. Ask about unadvertised deals and upgrades.

## Arrive at the port the night before

The cruise line doesn't care if the traffic was bad or your flight got delayed because of the weather. The ship will leave without you, and the responsibility to catch up with it is yours and yours alone.

## Walk right off the ship and head home

At the end of the cruise, if you carry your own bags, you can often disembark before everyone else.

## Don't forget your passport

Travelers returning to the United States by sea after visiting Mexico, Canada, the non-U.S. Caribbean, the Bahamas, and Bermuda don't need a passport until January (at the earliest). But anyone sailing before then should bring it anyway. If something unfortunate happens and you need to fly home, having a passport will make things considerably easier.

## Book your own excursions

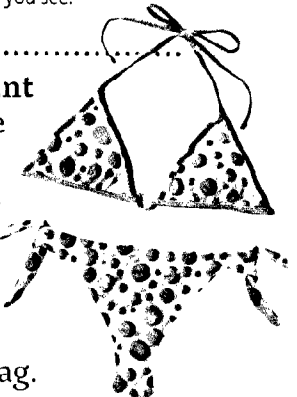
You can save money by finding out who's running the shore excursions or similar outings and booking directly with them. It's not without risks: If you book an excursion with an outside operator and don't get back to the ship in time, you're out of luck; but when you book through the cruise line, the ship will wait.

## Let cruise brokers fight over you

CruiseCompete.com is a website where you post info on the cruise you want to take, and then agents bid against each other to get your business. You're under no obligation to buy anything if you don't like what you see.

## Make the first day count

Your bags won't arrive at your cabin for a few hours after you board, so pack everything you might want in the interim (a book, swimsuit, sunblock...) inside your carry-on bag.



# Car Rentals

## Reserve the least expensive model

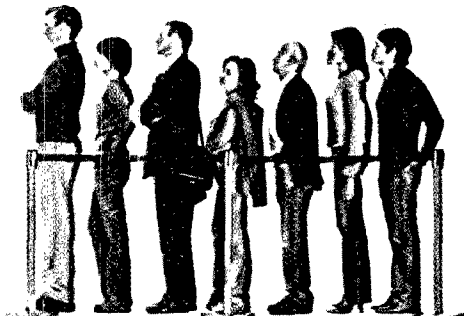
Once you select a model, no rental-car company will ever let you leave with a cheaper one. When the car you reserved isn't available, they'd rather give you a better car for the same price than a lesser car for a lower price. If you're inclined, you can negotiate an upgrade at the car-rental counter.

## Prepaid gas is for people traveling on expense accounts

You know who you are.

## Do ask, do tell

Laws vary by state and rules vary by company, but unmarried couples can often skip the extra-driver fee (and the paperwork) simply by telling the clerk that they're domestic partners. Don't wait for the clerk to ask what your relationship is. Other ways to try to get around the extra-driver fee: joining the loyalty club (what on earth are you waiting for?), saying that you're coworkers or that you're members of AAA, AARP, or Costco. The point is to ask.



## Grab the keys and go

Join the free loyalty club and you won't have to wait in what can be a cruelly long line, or tell the agent your address, or listen to the upsell on a bigger model or on insurance. You can get off the lot and into your vacation in a matter of minutes.

## Think globally, browse locally

It's a little-known fact that some car-rental companies have different websites for different countries, and the rates for the same rental can vary. The prices quoted at Budget.com, for instance, won't necessarily be equal to the rates at the sites for the United Kingdom (budget.co.uk), Germany (budget.de), Ireland (budget.ie), and South Africa (budget.co.za). It's worth poking around.

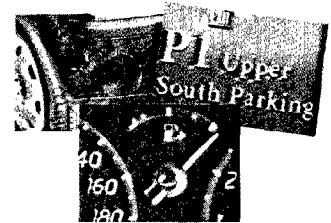
## Don't pay double for insurance

Insurance is a big profit generator for car-rental agencies, and they don't mind that it's confusing. If you own a car, however, your owner's policy will cover you no matter what car you're driving, including a rental. Also, most credit cards cover the Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) automatically, so there's no need to give the rental agency that extra \$10 to \$20 per day.

# On the Ground

## Take a photo of everything

Buy a digital camera (it'll change your life) and a big memory card (minimum one gig). Snap pictures of where you parked your rental car, the ferry schedule, how full the gas tank was when you returned the car to the lot, and so on. You can always delete the photos later.



## ATM? Credit cards? Traveler's checks?

All of the above. To get cash, use an ATM. Your bank may have agreements with foreign banks; Bank of America, for one, belongs to the Global ATM Alliance, which means its customers can make free withdrawals from over 30,000 ATMs in eight countries. Use credit cards to make purchases (if you have more than one, figure out which has the lowest conversion fee). In some countries, they'll print your account number on the receipt, so don't blithely toss it in the trash. For emergencies, it helps to bring a few hundred dollars in traveler's checks.

## Don't call home

There are ways to place calls cheaply from abroad, both with a cell phone and without (such as Skype). But unless you're traveling around the world for months on end, you don't really need to call. Create a Web-based e-mail account—such as the ones from Yahoo and Google—and keep in touch that way. You can go online at an Internet café for about \$3 an hour. In the U.S., also look for libraries, which tend to have free access.

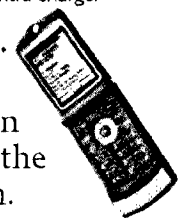
## Almost every city has a transit pass

And it's always a better deal than buying à la carte.

## Know your rights

If you're bumped from a domestic flight and you get onto another flight within one to two hours, the airline pays you the equivalent of a one-way fare (\$200 max); more than two hours and you get up to \$400. Vouchers are an option, too. If your checked bag is delayed, the airline covers expenses for toiletries and clothing until it delivers the bag to you. For a lost bag, the carrier must reimburse you, up to \$3,000. If your hotel is overbooked, the hotel must find you a room at a comparable or better property nearby, at no extra charge.

The new 411 Send a text message to 466453 ("Google") from your cell phone and you can get all kinds of info. You just need to know the shorthand; there's more at [sms.google.com](http://sms.google.com).



DL 395  
ATL  
Depart 17:38  
On Time  
Gate 15  
LAX  
Arrive 08:33

For flight arrival/departure info, type the flight number; in this case, "DL395"

(1/2) Weather:  
Miami FL  
75F Mostly Cloudy  
Wind:SE 10 mph  
Humid:8%  
Moon:UF /UF Mostly Sunny  
Tue:UF 8.F Chance of Storm

Send a text message of "w [city name]" to get a four-day weather forecast

From: 466 453  
Google Translations  
Hospital in English means  
"Krankenhaus" in German  
Wed, Apr 11, 9:53 am

Get translations of foreign words by sending "t [word or phrase] in [language]"

(1/2) Local Listings:  
Sam Taylor's Bar & Que  
135 S Cherry St  
Denver, 80216  
303 388 9308  
Waffle Louis B  
333 E Colfax Ave  
Denver, 80203

For local listings, text "[what you're looking for] [place name or zip code]"—such as "bbq denver co"

From: 466 453  
(1/2) Currency Conversions:  
2000 Mexican pesos =  
1618.281 U.S. dollars  
Fri, Apr 13, 12:14 pm

Text "[amount and currency] in [new currency]"—such as "2000 mxn in usd"—to do a currency conversion

(1/2) Directions:  
Distance: 114 mi (about 1 hour 50 mins) 9 stops  
1. Head west on E Washington St toward S Central Ave (1.2)  
2. Slight left at W Adams St (0.8)

For basic driving directions, text "[place or zip] to [place or zip]"—in this case, "phoenix az to 86336"

Clockwise from left: Corbis, Bob Jackson/Alamy, Rodolfo Arpa/Alamy, Tony Craddock/Alamy, Budget Travel (7)



**Don't save the best for the last day**

What if the weather turns crappy?  
What if you get sick?  
What if a giant meteor falls from the sky and lands right on your room? You'll wish that you had gone snorkeling earlier in your trip.

Nothing kills the fun like a long wait For most major attractions, you can buy tickets online in advance. Also, in many cities there are passes that can be a great deal, especially because they let you skip to the head of the line. The big U.S. pass companies are CityPass and Go Card. The New York CityPass, for instance, costs \$53 for adults—a smart value even if you're only going to three of the five attractions (see normal prices, below).



Guggenheim Museum \$18

Circle Line Sightseeing Cruise \$24

American Museum of Natural History & Rose Center \$14

Empire State Building \$18

Museum of Modern Art \$20

**Jet lag is inevitable**  
Human beings were not designed to fly halfway around the world. All you can really do is not drink alcohol on the plane, keep hydrated, get in synch with the new time zone as soon as you can, and exercise after landing (the last one is crucial).

**"See you inside!"**  
Some popular museums—such as the Louvre in Paris—have more than one entrance; the lesser-known ones often have shorter lines. And for some attractions, you can buy tickets at places other than the end of a long line at the front door. Tickets for Versailles are available in advance at Fnac record stores in France and at fnac.com; in Rome, tickets purchased at the Palatine museum also let you walk right into the Colosseum.

**A tax loophole for hunter-gatherers**  
When returning to the U.S., Americans may bring \$800 of goods for personal use without having to pay duties or taxes. If you buy more than that, ship it home: You can send \$200 of goods per day to yourself at a U.S. address. You can also send duty-free gifts worth up to \$100 per person per day to people in the U.S. Bear in mind that shipping companies charge based on bulk or weight, whichever costs more, so pack efficiently.

**Basic training**  
If the airport you're flying into is served by a train, take it if you're heading anywhere near the city center. Unless, of course, you're traveling in a group of three or more people, when a taxi is probably more cost-effective.

**If you're going to complain, do it right**  
1. Speak up as soon as you have a problem. The longer you wait, the more the company will assume it wasn't that big of a deal.  
2. Unsatisfied with the response? Politely ask for a supervisor. Never take no from someone who isn't empowered to say yes. The corollary is: Don't bitch to anyone who can't help you. All that you're doing is ruining their day.  
3. Even—or especially—if someone promises you the world, get it in writing.  
4. Build a case! Take notes, keep receipts, get names. Your goal is to show that you really mean business.  
5. When corresponding, do it by letter or e-mail. It beats calling, getting passed around, and telling your story over and over. But make copies before you send any originals.

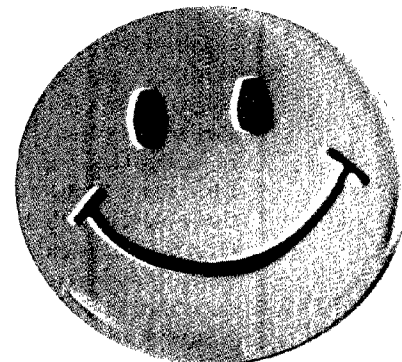
# Tipping

**It's good karma**  
In a perfect world, you wouldn't need to tip if you were already paying a service charge (as is the case with coat-check clerks and room-service waiters). Too bad the world ain't perfect. When in doubt, you should err on the side of generosity. It's more common to regret under-tipping than overtipping.

**Customs vary from country to country**  
If you read only one part of a guidebook before arriving someplace, make it the part on tipping. Then flag it: You'll be revisiting it.

**Tipping the boat**  
On most cruise ships, tips are automatically added to your bill. There's leeway to tip more or less—but if you'd like to reduce the service fee, you'll probably have to explain your reasons to the purser. Don't be afraid to have that conversation: The cruise line should want to know when its passengers are disappointed.

**General rules for tipping in the U.S.**  
Bellmen: Figure \$1 or \$2 per bag. It's fair to show yourself to the room if you'd rather not deal.  
Housekeepers: Some folks think you don't have to tip; some believe you should tip daily to make sure the money goes to the person who cleaned your room; some wait until the end of the stay. A couple of bucks per day won't mean as much to you as it will to the housekeeper. (But don't tip at B&Bs if the maid is also the owner.)  
Concierges: Giving you directions is part of the job. Snagging a theater ticket or restaurant reservation merits at least \$20.  
Waiters: Under 15 percent means you didn't like the service. Don't worry about the sommelier; let the restaurant determine how to divide up all the tips.  
Taxi drivers: Tips should be 15 to 20 percent, or around one dollar for every five dollars of fare. Round up to the nearest buck. No one likes to deal with change.



**Be nice**

The previous 104 rules are all well and good, but ultimately, the quality of your travel experience depends a lot on who you deal with. Treating everyone—even the crabbiest crabs—with kindness and respect can be more powerful than any strategem. You never know: In your next life, you may come back as a TSA agent.

From top, left to right: CO2/Getty Images; Stephen Chernin/Getty Images; courtesy Circle Line; D. Finnin/Alamy; Eric van den Braker/Getty Images; Michael Kim/Corbis; Jose Luis Pelaez/Corbis