



Travel Smart Quick Tips

1. **Start early.**

Once you determine where you're going to be going, begin gathering everything you need to make your trip a pleasant one. Need a passport? Apply at least 3 months ahead of time or you'll pay extra for express delivery. Secure airline reservations at least 8 weeks prior if possible, especially if traveling aboard. The closer it gets to the date you want to leave, the more the tickets will cost. Reserve hotel and car rentals well ahead of time to ensure your reservation is accepted. Get maps, surf the net and speak with others to get specific travel tips for the areas you're visiting. Get maps. They can be lifesavers along the way. Use a GPS system if you have one.

2. **Call ahead.**

Contact your hotel ahead of time to find out what their amenities are. If they have a hair dryer in each room for instance, you won't have to bring yours along. If they have laundry facilities, you can pack even less since you'll be able to wash while you're there. If they have exercise facilities, you may want to bring some sneakers along. Better to know ahead, so you're prepared.

3. **Apply the 50% rule.**

When packing clothing for a trip, lay out everything you think you'll need on your bed--then, put 50% of it back in your closet. Most people take way more than is necessary and end up carrying unnecessary weight along the way. Chances are, you'll be able to wear each outfit at least twice, especially if you mix and match different tops with different bottoms.

4. **Use a packing list.**

Come up with a list of everything you need to take with you when travelling. Organize each item by genre: clothing, toiletries, financial, etc. Make copies of this list, so you can reference it for each trip you take. As you're packing, check off each item on your list as you put it in your suitcase. Finally, pack your list and use it on your last day of vacation or business trip so you remember to take everything back home with you.

5. **Take an empty suitcase.**

If you're the type of person who shops when you travel, be sure you bring along an extra suitcase. You'll have the perfect place to put your souvenirs and gifts purchased during your trip.

6. Make a schedule.

Find out what you wish to do at your destination BEFORE you get there. Then, make yourself a schedule for each day based on criteria, such as the days and times a particular store or museum is open. If you wish to switch some events around when you get there, that's OK. But, at least you'll have something to reference so you're not wasting time wondering what you should do or what's open on what days.

7. Carry one on.

If you're taking an airline or other mass transit to your destination, always carry on a small carry-on bag that contains your prescription medications, a toothbrush/toothpaste duo, non-liquid cosmetics, your cell phone, a change of underwear and a good book. Just in case your luggage doesn't make it when you do, you'll have your important items with you.

8. Bag it.

If you don't plan on washing your clothes while you're away, be sure to pack an empty plastic bag so your dirty items can be kept separate from your clean clothes.

9. Bring games for the kids.

When taking a road trip, it's definitely worth it to stop by your local travel store to find some travel games for the kids, such as Travel Bingo, magnetic checkers, or coloring books. Also, don't forget some snacks and boxed juices as the little ones are bound to get hungry at one point or another. In fact, you might want to bring a few snacks along for yourself while you're at it!

10. Safety first.

Make two copies of your itinerary--one for yourself and one for family members who are not traveling with you. Those at home will be able to contact you in case of an emergency.

11. Play catch-up.

As long as you're not driving, travel time could easily be used for catching up on some business work, reading, or letter writing. Laptops have made it easy to bring your work along with you if you choose. Magazines or a good book can be tucked into your carry-on for reading while you're on the road, in a plane, or later while you're in bed at a hotel or a relative's home.

12. There's no place like home.

Before you leave for vacation, clean your house, wash all of your laundry and make your bed. When you arrive back after your vacation, your home will be a welcome haven.