

MUG: 50 Travel Tips You Never Knew You Needed

**McKenzie Ultimate Guides: - 50 Travel Tips
You Never Knew You Needed**

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Acknowledgements

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About the Author



I'm a commercial aviation enthusiast who is currently a nomad, but based in the United States. I worked in the airline industry from 1994 to 2011 when I did an early retirement. As a Travepreneur, I run several travel-related blogs online (Passrider.com, Cruisinaltitude.com, CookingWithKerwin.com) helping to find travel solutions for travelers.

I hold a Masters degree in Aeronautical Sciences from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University known as the “Harvard of the Skies,” and also a Computer Science with Mathematics concentration from Hofstra University.

I can remember my first airplane flight in the summer of 1974 as if it were yesterday. My flight was on a Cessna SkyMaster from the Tinson Pen Aerodrome in Kingston, Jamaica, to Boscobel, Jamaica, lasting a little under two

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hours I think. I was elated as my dream to fly on an airplane had finally come true!

My first commercial airplane flight was during the summer of 1980 on BWIA (now Caribbean Airlines), from Kingston, Jamaica (KIN) to Fort-de-France, Martinique (FDF). I spent 17 days there as a French Exchange student. On my way back, I stopped in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti (PAP) for two days.

Today, I fly as often as I can, sometimes just for the sake of being in the air and around an airport or an airplane. My itinerary may take me to Nagasaki, Japan, Denali National Park in Alaska or even to Belgrade, Serbia. Yup, 114 countries/territories so far and 162 airlines and counting.

In 2015, I flew approximately 206,545 miles to places such as Germany, Hong Kong, France, Russia, Singapore and Jamaica. I'm looking forward to visiting more exciting destinations in 2016 and beyond.

I hope you are seizing the moment and exploring the world as well.

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I Want to Hear from You!

If you have any comments, please go to <http://www.cruisinaltitude.com/contact-us> I want to hear from you.

In addition, you are invited to join the Facebook community at <http://www.facebook.com/TheExpertTraveler> where you can interact with your fellow travelers.

Here you can ask questions, post videos, photos, etc. that are related to your travels.

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Travel Tips

I took my first plane ride during the Summer of 1980 and ever since I've been hooked. I love to people watch when I travel as that's the way I learn what works and what does not. Also people like to tell me their stories when I travel. I've yet to figure out why, but I continue to listen.

So, here are some of the things I've learned along the way that I'd like to wow, amaze and amuse you with a view to making your journey spectacular as for me, its all about the journey.

- 1. Be nice to the agents** - As you interact with front line representatives, please be courteous. These are the folks that will get you a better seat on the plane, train or auto; a better room in your hotel and your requests from room service, etc. They are people too and have families just like you do. So please treat them with respect. I assure you that your situation will be a 100% better if you do that.
- 2. Take a headset with you** - Most airlines have entertainment systems onboard. So bringing your

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headsets will save you some money if they charge for it. Besides your headsets are far better than the one the airline provides unless you're in Business or First Class.

Have a great flight.

3. **Wear clothing with sleeves** - Try not to wear sleeveless clothing when you travel. Remember you will be sitting next to another person and you will sweat. I don't think you want to sweat on that other person, do you?
4. **Check local laws before you go** - If you are going to a foreign country with a specific task in mind, check the local law on that task. For example, if you are on a photographic expedition, check if a permit is required to take photos or film in specific places. Simple things like is there a jay walking law? Is spitting on the streets allowed, etc. are important and may find you in precarious positions in specific countries.
5. **Always ask for compensation in case of trouble at hotels** - If you are staying at a hotel and have any issues with the room, always ask for immediate compensation. If none is given, then upon

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your return home, send a note to the hotel, explain what happened and see if they will give you some sort of compensation. Always give them a chance to rectify the situation though. Most good hotels will compensate you without you even asking.

- 6. Check the security of your hotel room** - Once you've checked into your hotel room, look around and ensure the room is safe. So check the windows, the sliding doors, the main door, etc. If you like you can use the hotel safe or the safe in your room to store your valuables. If someone comes to the door, do not open it unless you know them or are expecting the hotel staff. Always ask who they are and why they are there before opening the door.
- 7. Get a local map on arrival** - Once you arrive in a city, get a local map from the Tourist office. This is essential especially if you are not familiar with that city. You can usually get a free map from the airport office or the office in the city center. Almost all the times its free.
- 8. Read the contract of carriage** - When you purchase a ticket from transportation provider you

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should ensure you read the contract of carriage. This is the document that governs your purchase. If you do not have access to it online, you can always call the company and request one. This document will tell you your entitlements in the case of a cancellation, a delay, baggage lost, etc. Use it to your advantage.

- 9. Don't use the flash on your camera while taking the pictures of trains** - When taking pictures of oncoming trains, don't use the flash on your camera as it may temporarily blind the driver.
- 10. Make damage claims before leaving the airport** - If your baggage gets damaged while traveling on an airline, you are required to make a claim before you leave the airport at which it was damaged or within a few hours after leaving the airport. While this may be inconvenient, it is the first step in the process. Again the Contract of Carriage has details on this.
- 11. Don't ask for favors unnecessarily** - When you are traveling, don't ask people to be uncomfortable so that you can be comfortable. Plan ahead so that you can get the amenities that you need to make your trip enjoyable. As an example, don't ask someone to give up

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their seat so that you and your family can sit together.

Your family's happiness has nothing to do with this stranger. Book early, use the online systems created to help you or call the company providing the service and look after your needs. While some people may help you, they may not be happy about it and you may have totally ruined their trip.

- 12. Check the local paper** - You should check the local paper to see what is going on in the city you visit. This will help you to optimize your time while there.
- 13. Check train schedules** - You should ensure you check your train schedules at least the night before you are taking the train. This ensures that you are aware of any last minute changes or delays. You can check the web site for the operator or most of them have an App you can download.
- 14. Adjust your watch for local time** - You should ensure that your watch is adjusted for local time. Or at least be cognizant of the time difference. Sometimes your mobile phone won't switch to the local time so be aware of that as well. Why is this important? It makes it easier for your mind and body to acclimatize to the

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local time. Quit saying, I wonder what time is it at home? Just adapt yourself to the local time and your experience will be so much better.

15. Keep your shoes on - When you are flying you should keep your shoes on for takeoff and landing. In case you need to evacuate the airplane you don't want to be without your shoes. For women, don't wear spike heeled shoes as you will have to take them off before you jump on the slide since they have the propensity to rip the slip as you go down the side of the airplane. If you take them off during the flight, make sure you wear a pair of socks or a pair of travel slippers (some airlines will provide these usually if you are in Business/First class). This is especially important if you are sitting at the bulkhead row. No one wants to see your bare feet on the bulkhead. Plus the airplane floor is really dirty as many people have walked on it and you have no idea where their feet have been. Definitely, if you get up to use the lavatory, put your shoes on.

16. Sign up for SmartGate - If you travel a lot in and out of Australia, you should sign up for SmartGate at <http://www.border.gov.au/smartgate>. It helps to speed you through Immigration. Also, if your passport has a

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smart chip, you can just use the machines in the Immigration Halls in Sydney and other international airport sin Australia. The machines will read the chip and take you through the expedited Immigration procedures.

- 17. Don't annoy your flight attendant** – Onboard the cabin crew (flight attendants) and the pilots are in charge. Even if you don't like what they tell you, comply. You can take it up with the airline by filing a complaint once you are off the plane.
- 18. Use a pillow to support your back** - For lumbar support, place an airline pillow in the small of your back when seated in an airplane seat.
- 19. Pay attention to the safety demo** – If I were to have a pet peeve about how people behave on planes, this would be it. People just yak away and loudly too. Pay attention to the safety procedures onboard the plane. It is important that you know how to leave the airplane in case of an emergency. The flight attendants are really doing this for your benefit, so do them the courtesy and pay attention. The fact that you've heard it

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before does not mean that the person sitting next to or across from you have. So be nice. Zip it!

- 20. Research hotel valet parking** - When using a hotel's parking facility, check if they have self-park facilities or just valet. Also ask about surrounding parking garages; you can also research this yourself on the Internet. You could save some bucks. Although the in/out privileges at your hotel may be worth paying the extra charge; just do the math.
- 21. Always check your car rental bill** - You should always verify your car rental bill before paying. Ask to see the bill and if you don't understand something, ask to have it explained before you pass the credit card to the agent or approve the card on which you made the rental. Then when you get the email receipt, check it again.
- 22. Count the seats to the Exit row** - A good thing to do is to count the number of seats between you and the emergency exit. Do this as you board the plane or after you have been seated. Remember that in an emergency, you may be disoriented and your visibility may be reduced.

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- 23. Keep your seatbelts fastened** - While the plane is flying and you are seated, you should keep your seatbelt fastened. There is no questions about that. Clear air turbulence is very real. You can be seriously injured if you hit really bad turbulence and you are not belted in your seat. Please be careful.
- 24. Place one carry on luggage in the overhead bin** - As a courtesy to other passengers, place one carry on in the overhead bin and the other under the seat in front of you. Have the wheels point towards you so that other bags can fit neatly next to it. If you have a jacket, keep it in your lap until others have boarded to allow others space to place their bags. Once the boarding is complete, you can then place your jacket above the bags.
- 25. Check the amenities on your flight** - On most airlines' Web sites, you can find links to the amenities available during the flight. Research things such as movies and onboard power to name two. This will help you to prepare for your flight. On long flights, you may have to take two batteries for your electronic device if your flight does not have in-seat power. You must

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check the rules though as some batteries are not allowed on the airplane. Some airlines today provide entertainment via their App. If this is the case you MUST download the App before the flight departs otherwise you will not be able to access the system.

- 26. Check for a post office at the airport** - Some airports do have a facility to mail your postcard and other items at the airport. If you cannot immediately find it, ask at the information counter. If you cannot find one and you happen to have stamps, sometimes the staff at the information counter or at the airline lounge will mail it for you. Just ask nicely.
- 27. Don't leave stuff on the plane** - Remember to gather all your belongings when leaving the plane. If necessary make a mental check list of all the stuff you remove from your bag. I'm pretty bad about this one and have left a few items in the past; a jacket, a checkbook and a camera lens. I actually got back the camera lens and the checkbook. If you do leave stuff onboard, contact the airline as soon as you realize its missing. Some airlines have a left onboard section on their Web site to help you.

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- 28. Get travel insurance** - Anything can happen before or during your trip, so you should consider purchasing travel insurance. One thing to note though is that you should read the policy so you understand what is covered. Spending \$50 or so to insure your \$3,000 trip is a pure no-brainer. You can find information at <http://www.cruisinaltitude.com/travelinsurance>.
- 29. Don't use ointments onboard the plane, train, buses, etc.** – I know you are trying to get comfortable and may have an ailment, but don't use things like tiger balm, icy hot or things like that as the odor is quite pungent and will annoy other passengers. Wait until you've arrived at your destination to do this.
- 30. Similarly, don't use nail polish** – Using nail polish and nail polish remover onboard an airplane is a no-no. I know you may be bored, but the odor has nowhere to go but just recirculates in the airplane. So please wait until you land.
- 31. Give yourself extra time at the airport during Holidays** - During Holidays, give yourself extra time to get to the airport as the highways are usually

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crowded. You will also need more time to clear security as the lines will be longer.

32. Check the cost of things at your destination

city before you go - You can use this handy program to check travel cost in your destination city:

33. Place your carry-on luggage in the correct

cabin - When you fly, place your carry-on luggage in the overhead bin of the class of service in which you are flying. In that I mean if you are flying in Economy class, place your luggage in Economy class, not in Business class. Remember your luggage can go anywhere in the overheads in your cabin. It does not necessarily have to be the one above your seat. If possible, I usually put my bag in the overhead across from where I'm sitting, this way I can keep an eye on it.

34. Keep the overhead bins closed

– If you've taken something out of the overhead bins on your flight, please close it back. The last thing you want is for something to fall out and hit someone else.

35. Keep your assigned seat

- When you board an airplane, ensure that you stay in your assigned seat. Don't place your stuff on the open seat as more than

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likely it belongs to someone. If you wanted two seats, consider paying for the second one. Of course if no one shows, you can always move to that open seat as long as you check with the flight attendant. Sometimes, the seats are assigned specifically to facilitate the weight and balance of the airplane, so changing seats will affect that. Also in some instances an open seat may cost more than the one in which you are sitting and have paid for. So it's best to ask the crew first.

36. Take your bicycle with you - If you travel with a bicycle, it may be one of your checked luggage if it is the right size. So check with your airline. Otherwise you will have to pay a service fee to carry it.

37. Get a credit card from your favorite airline -

If you want to rack up frequent flyer miles, it is a good idea to get a credit card from your airline. Then use it as often as you can. The miles will come in and before you know it you have a free trip. Some of the cards even offer sign up bonus miles if you spend a certain amount during a specific time period. Ensure you get a card that does not have any transaction fee for international purchases. My suggestion is the Chase Sapphire Card.

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While not an airline card, you can transfer the miles to a number of airline and hotel programs at a ration of 1:1.

- 38. You may have to check the liquid items you buy onboard the plane** - If you buy liquid items in duty free on the plane or after clearing security, it may be necessary to place it in your bag and check that bag if you are connecting to another city when your plane lands. The flight attendant onboard the plane will advise.
- 39. Use the official airport taxi service** - Only hire a taxi from the official airport taxi stand. Don't take a ride from some person approaching you and saying they are a taxi driver. Typically there is a board that shows the flat rates to different parts of the city in which you are located or they will use a meter to determine the cost. Ensure that you are clear on how your fare will be calculated before you depart the airport. It is also a good idea to note the driver's name and cab number before leaving the cab. This way if you leave something in the cab, you can identify the driver and the cab.
- 40. Find a nearby convenience store** – Once you've located where you are staying and get settled in, try to

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find a nearby convenience food store. This way you can purchase inexpensive snacks or drinks. This will save you money and also take care of those hunger pangs at weird hours in the morning due to jetlag.

- 41. Research local alcohol laws** – If you drink alcohol, its a good idea to research the local alcohol laws. This will help you determine if you can drink on the streets, where to buy alcohol, what times alcohol is sold, etc. These rules vary by country and religion, so this is not as simple as you think. In the U.S. for example, it varies by the country of a particular city in which you are staying.
- 42. Take your airline's local number with you** - Check your airline's Web site for a number in the city/country you are visiting. Have it handy in case it is necessary to contact them. The same is true for any transportation provider.
- 43. Get a massage at your destination** - A massage on arrival can help to relax your muscles and alleviate the effects of jetlag. Consider getting one as it may actually be cheaper than at your home city.

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44. If you travel with kids, take some toys - Take

some toys for the kids to play with so they won't be bored during the trip. It's even harder for them since they don't really have any concept of time when they are younger.

45. Check the local Holidays before you go - It is a

good idea to check when are the local Holidays for your destination. This will ensure that you can get transportation when you arrive among other things. It will also ensure that the sights are open and shops are also open. As an example, on Christmas Day the public transportation in the U.K. is pretty much shut down. There may also be religious Holidays in some countries. One thing to note here, is that typically most museums are closed on a Monday, so factor that into your plans.

46. Learn the tipping rules before you go – It's

very common to leave a tip for services rendered in the U.S., but it's not the same in every country. So it is a good idea to learn the ropes before you go. You don't want to end up embarrassing yourself and others around you. A good place to start is this Web site at

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[http://www.cntraveler.com/stories/2008-11-](http://www.cntraveler.com/stories/2008-11-11/etiquette-101-tipping-guide)

[11/etiquette-101-tipping-guide](http://www.cntraveler.com/stories/2008-11-11/etiquette-101-tipping-guide). As an example,

typically in Japan you don't tip as it may be considered insulting.

- 47. Check for free museums** - In select cities the museums are free. Check before you go. This is the case in London, England where almost all the museums are free. They may also be free on select days and after select times of the day. This will save you a lot of money especially if your party is large.
- 48. Visit the local library** - When in foreign cities and even your local country, look for libraries where you can usually get free Internet access and do quick research if necessary. Depending on where you are, it may be necessary to sign up for a library card and there may be a charge for the card.
- 49. Try the local drinks** - It is a cool thing to try the local drinks when you visit a foreign country. You may meet some locals and just have a great time doing it.
- 50. Stay at a local university or convent** - Check with the local university or a convent to see if they have accommodations. In select cities; typically in Europe

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and Asia the Universities will rent out the dorm rooms when school is not in session. You could save quite a bit of money this way. I've actually done this in Toronto, ON Canada and the rates are quite reasonable. Plus the local bus went right by the University so I was all sorted for public transportation. Since it's a University you do get a kitchen but usually you have to share the toilet and bathrooms, so bear that in mind.

51. Consider a combination of transportation

methods - Whenever possible try multi-modal transportation for your journey. For example, if you are flying into Berlin, Germany (TXL), you may fly into say Frankfurt, Germany (FRA) and then take the train up to Berlin. The German train system is quite efficient and if you plan ahead you can get some good fares. Other ideas are if you want to get to Paris, fly into say, Amsterdam or London and take the train the rest of the way. The train journeys are quite nice and picturesque. There are also bus options: You could fly into London and take the bus to say Manchester and then fly back out of Manchester to your point of origin or fly into Vancouver, BC Canada and take a bus down to Seattle, WA. The possibilities are endless. Try it out and let us

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Here are some links:

Buses

- <http://www.easybus.com>
- <http://www.GotoBus.com>
- <http://www.megabus.com>
- <http://nationalexpress.com>
- <http://www.quickcoach.com> (Quick Shuttle Service)
- <http://www.boltbus.com>
- <http://www.greyhound.com>

Trains

- United States - <http://www.amtrak.com>
- Germany - <http://www.bahn.de>
- <http://www.eurostar.com>
- Netherlands - <http://www.ns.nl>
- <http://www.raileurope.com>
- France - <http://www.sncf.com>
- Canada - <http://www.viarail.ca>

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Ferries

- United Kingdom - <http://www.aferry.co.uk>
- South American - <http://www.buquebus.com>
- Canada/Washington State - <http://cohoferry.com>
- Europe - <http://www.ferrylines.com>

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What To Do Next?

So you are now prepared for your journey. Have a great trip.

Remember to join our Facebook community at <http://www.facebook.com/TheExpertTraveler> and share tips and tricks with your fellow travelers.

Resources

Check out <http://www.cruisinaltitude.com> for additional travel tips.