



# *Must-Know Secrets for International Vacationers*

**BOISE TRAVEL AGENT, LLC**



*I really hope to be the person that  
guides you in planning your luxury vacation  
adventure, whether it is to Italy  
or another destination of your choice.*

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## *Prepare Your Documents*

1. Make sure you have all your travel documents.
2. Your travel advisor should provide you with a detailed itinerary containing all addresses and contact numbers that you will need. Keep this information in your carry-on.
3. Give a copy of the itinerary to each person traveling with you and the person who will be looking after things for you at home.
4. Before you leave home, email yourself and all your travel companions a copy of your vital information such as whom to call in case of emergency, where to meet, and insurance information. Make sure this email is kept on your email server.
5. Make two copies of your credit cards, driver's license, health insurance card(s), and passports. Keep a copy at home. Take a copy with you and carry it separately from the originals. Keep a copy on a secure server such as Dropbox or Google drive. You can then access the information from any computer.



## *Prepare Your Documents (cont'd)*

6. Make sure your passport is valid for six months past your return date (many countries require this).
7. Check with [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov) for regulation regarding your carry-on items.
8. Make sure you know the luggage limitations and cost for the airline you will be on.
9. Go to Google Maps and print out driving directions for all your main drives for the trip. Do this as backup even if you have a GPS.
10. If you will be driving in Italy, get your IDP (International Driving Permit). I advise this for all other European countries, but in Italy it is required by law. Access the application here. [American Automobile Touring Alliance \(AATA\)](#)



## *Odds and Ends to Remember*

1. A couple of weeks before you leave, reconfirm all your travel arrangements. Your travel advisor should provide you with a detailed itinerary containing all addresses and contact numbers that you will need. Keep this information in your carry-on.
2. Call the airline 72 hours in advance to make sure your flights have not changed, to verify your seating and request any special needs.
3. Arrange care for your pet, lawn, and plants.
4. Let a trusted neighbor know that you will be gone and for how long.
5. Put your lights on timers to make your home look lived in.
6. Make sure your bills are paid up to date. Pay any bills that will come due while you are gone.
7. Have your newspaper and mail held.
8. **DO NOT** post on social media that you are going on vacation. That is an open invitation to thieves.

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## *Money Matters*

Planning to pay with a combination of cash, credit or debit cards can be the best strategy when visiting the other countries. Here's why: ATM machines are not always readily available in some places so relying solely on cash may lead to trouble. You do not need traveler's checks; most places stopped accepting traveler's checks a few years ago.

1. Prior to departure, contact your credit/debit card company(s) to advise that you will be traveling outside the US. Check the expiration dates on your card(s) to ensure it is valid at least one month beyond your travel dates. This is a good time to ask about foreign transaction and ATM withdrawal fees.
2. Order foreign currency from your bank so you don't arrive without any cash; just in case you can't find an ATM immediately.
3. There may be an international transaction fee (1-4%) charged for some credit/debit card purchases made outside the US. You want to use a credit card that does NOT charge these fees. Using a credit card for your purchases will give you the exchange rate available that day.
4. The best location for exchanging US currency into foreign currency is at an ATM or a local bank. The front desk of the hotel is the worst.

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## *ATM*

1. Your best source of cash is an automated teller machine (ATM) or cashpoint. You'll find ATMs on banks and post offices all over. Most of them have step-by-step instructions in your choice of English and other languages.
2. When you use a foreign ATM you may be charged a withdrawal fee, but you will get the bank exchange rate. Cash will be in the local currency.
3. Ask your local bank if they have a "corresponding" bank partner abroad that will not charge fees for ATM withdrawals. Also, inquire about any daily withdrawal limits.
4. To use ATMs abroad you may need an international PIN number. Check with your bank prior to traveling.
5. Mexico is no longer as lenient in accepting US dollars. When using dollars south of the border, one is limited to \$100 in purchases at stores and can exchange no more than \$1500 a month. Credit/debit card purchases are not affected.



## *Credit Cards*

1. Visa and MasterCard are accepted by most shops and restaurants, though smaller merchants, some neighborhood restaurants or bars, and street vendors may not take credit cards. (Also, restaurant tips are normally given in cash.) American Express is accepted at higher-end boutiques and restaurants that cater to tourists.
2. In Europe, most automatic machines (i.e. parking meters, highway tolls, ticket kiosks, etc.) no longer accept US credit/debit cards unless they are embedded with a chip. The same is true for some smaller merchants and restaurants, and the list continues to expand. For these transactions, and similar situations, it is recommended that you have euros on hand.
3. Cash advances against a credit card result in higher (and immediate) interest rate charges. We recommend using your debit card or a prepaid Visa travel money card.
4. Think about starting your trip off with some local currency in hand. Many US banks allow you to order currency online and have it shipped via FedEx.

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## *Common Scam*

Someone calls your hotel room in the middle of the night, waking you. The person says he's with the hotel management and needs to verify your credit card, because the imprint taken upon check-in is blurry. Because you are half asleep, you give out the number. Of course, that is all the scam artist needs. Solution: Call your credit card issuer immediately.



## *Prior to Arrival*

1. Check in for your flight 24 hours prior to departure.
2. Make sure to reconfirm your flight before going to the airport.
3. Have all necessary documents for minors traveling with you (make sure that your travel professional has all the details so that they can advise you of exactly what you need).

## *Upon Arrival*

1. Arrive at the airport with plenty of time to relax after checking in for your flight. Allow 2 hours prior to your departure time - more time certainly would not hurt.
2. Upon check-in for your flight, you will need your passport.
3. Keep all Visas required for your destination in your passport.
4. Have your flight confirmation either paper copy or on your phone.
5. Proof of immunization (if required by the country that you are visiting).
6. Make sure that you personally check in each piece of luggage with the counter advisor and confirm that they are checked through to their final destination or if you have to claim them along the way and recheck them. Do not allow anyone else to check them for you.
7. Present the necessary documents for your flight(s) and reconfirm the boarding passes with the counter agent, making sure that you have received all boarding passes for your flight.



### *Upon Arrival (cont'd)*

8. If you are boarding in a country outside of the United States, you will need to clear immigrations on the way to the departure gates. You will need to present your passport and boarding passes. In some countries you may be required to go through an interview with immigration officials, or if you are singled out for a secondary inspection, as well. Don't worry about this, as it is just a precaution.
9. Once you have your luggage receipts and boarding passes, proceed to the security checkpoint, and be prepared to present your passport, and boarding pass to be processed through the security checkpoint. Again, you may be singled out for a secondary search that may include being manually searched and your carry-ons completely inspected.
10. Present the necessary documents for your flight(s) and reconfirm the boarding passes with the counter agent, making sure that you have received all boarding passes for your flight.
11. **Do not** use hand lotion the morning you are traveling. The glycerin is an ingredient in bombs.
12. **NEVER** act in a defensive or aggressive manner during any of the above processes.
13. **NEVER** joke or give any of the people in charge of the processes a reason to single you out. Many vacations have been ruined by folks taking offense to the processes and thereby being delayed and missing their flights.



## *Arriving at Your Destination*

1. Once you arrive at your destination you will be deplaned and ushered into Immigration. You will need to present your passport to be allowed to enter the country.
2. You will then proceed to luggage claim where you can then claim your luggage. Make sure that your luggage has not been tampered with and if you have placed anything of value in your luggage, be sure that it is still there.
3. You will then be required to go through customs to exit the baggage claim area. You will be provided with a customs declaration form on your flight. You will be required to submit this form to the customs official to clear customs.
4. **NEVER** try to take undeclared items through customs. If you are singled out for a secondary search and they are found you may be deported right then and there, or worse.
5. Once you enter the main terminal at your destination, do not respond to people asking if you need a taxi, transfer, tour guide or any other service. If you are being met for a transfer to your hotel you will see them waiting for you with your name on a sign. If you are going to negotiate for a transfer to your hotel, most airports will have a taxi stand or queue that you should use.
6. **NEVER** respond to someone offering you a service after approaching you.

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## *European Hotels*

1. Europe's hospitality industry is centuries old and its hotels often reflect the varied traditions and standards of their respective countries. While comfortable, be prepared for differences and do not expect European hotels to be the same as home. Single rooms in European hotels are often smaller than in USA hotels. When booking a triple room, the third bed may be a rollaway cot. In most European countries, including a continental breakfast is the norm, consisting of tea/coffee, rolls and butter, jam/marmalade; some may include an assortment of cheese and luncheon meats.
2. **Hotel Check Out** Each time you check out of a hotel, check your room prior to leaving. Open every drawer, look under the bed and door, including the bathroom. The return of items forgotten is nearly impossible.
3. **Phone Calls** Almost all hotels will add a service charge to the cost of any phone calls you make from your room. This charge can be high, especially for international calls. It is always cheaper to use public telephones, pay phones or an international calling service such as AT&T USA Direct. Also, many countries now sell calling cards. I have found them to be very economical and easy to use. If you purchase your phone cards in the U.S. make sure you contact the phone company, before you leave, to find out what the dialing access codes are for each country you will be visiting.

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## *European Hotels (cont'd)*

4. **Electrical Voltage** Electrical currents vary in Europe. Some appliances have dual voltage, but if not, it is suggested that you carry a converter for electric shavers, traveling iron, hair appliances and other small appliances. Also, pins, holes and plugs differ everywhere, so it is best to have a universal electrical travel adapter before you go to prevent accidents and damage to your appliances.

**Note:** Laptops and cell phone charges will require a different converter than what you would use for a hair dryer. Please check the converter to be sure you have the correct one for your appliance. Otherwise, you risk frying your appliance.

## *Suggested Tipping*

1. **Taxi fare** on meter - 10 – 15%
2. **Restaurant** – total bill - 10 – 15% (if not already included, check the menu)
3. **Tour** director/motor coach driver - \$2.00 per person/per day
4. **Local** sightseeing guide - \$2.00 per person.

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## *Packing 101*

1. Make sure you have your medications packed in your carryon bag in case your luggage is delayed. Keep all copies of prescriptions, tickets, passports, etc. separate from originals in case of loss.
2. Make sure your toiletries are packed in your checked luggage. You can only take items that fit in a quart sized, zip-lock bag and contain less than 3 oz each of liquid, in your carry-on.
3. Remember to pack warm clothing, particularly if you are traveling to alpine regions. Weather in Europe, especially in the mountains, can be colder than most people think. Check the weather channel or newspaper to see what conditions to expect.
4. Wear comfortable clothes, which are mixable with other pieces. Remember that your clothes are new to the other people on the tour who have never met you before. Mixing and matching helps to pack light. If you wear clothes that you are comfortable in, you will be more relaxed. Men only need one tie and women one dress or skirt if you plan to dine in more upscale restaurants.

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## *Packing 101 (cont'd)*

5. Make sure to bring a pair of comfortable, broken-in shoes for daytime walking. In many cities in Europe, parking is restricted, and you may have to walk several blocks to see the major sites. Remember, when you visit museums and other sites of interest, you will be on your feet for long periods of time. There is nothing worse than aching feet at the end of the day.
6. Rather than bringing one umbrella to share it is better for everyone to have his or her own fold up umbrella. If the rain occurs with mild weather, it will eliminate the need to carry a raincoat.
7. Washcloths are not standard in most hotels in Europe. Cut an old bath towel from home into squares to use as washcloths. When done with them you can just throw them away.
8. Pack the right attitude – try to forget about the stock market and other news at home; try to make your vacation the experience of a lifetime.

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## *Jewelry - Leave It Home and Stay Safe!*

1. Costume jewelry travels beautifully. You should leave items of monetary and sentimental value at home. This will allow you to be more carefree and doesn't encourage theft.
2. Unless you absolutely need your jewelry for some reason essential to your trip, leave it all at home. Wearing your \$20k Rolex in most countries is an invitation for disaster. Ditto for that beautiful 2 cwt. diamond ring. Leave it at home and save yourself the potential for a lot of grief, or worse.
3. Only carry what is necessary while traveling. Leave your real wallet and other valuables at home and only carry your "travel wallet". Your "travel wallet" should contain a copy of your passport and driver's license, an ATM card, your insurance information, your contact information, and enough cash for a 48-hour period.
4. Most important is to carry an "In Case of Emergency Contact" card with critical contact information on it. Your travel advisor should be the #1 contact, as they can immediately go to work to resolve whatever problem has arisen.
5. Be aware of your surroundings always and remember that as a tourist, you are the most desirable target for crime. Even if someone is caught red handed, they know that it is highly unlikely that you would show up at a hearing to testify. By not wearing or carrying anything valuable worth stealing, you have eliminated 99% of the risk.

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## *Passports*

1. If you owe \$2,500 or more in child support, you are not eligible to receive a U.S. passport. Pay your child support arrears to the appropriate state child support enforcement agency before applying for your passport.
2. Always carry your passport with you to ensure against loss or theft in hotels. For added protection, keep a photocopy of your passport in your suitcase. Also, send your travel advisor or a family member a copy of your current passport so that if you have a loss you can contact us and we will send a copy to you.
3. Many countries require that your passport be valid for six months after the end of your trip.

**Note:** Do not be alarmed if the hotel or cruiseline asks for your passport. Hotels are sometimes required to hold your passport overnight to comply with local regulations. You should ask when you could expect it returned.

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## *Surviving the Red-Eye*

1. **Water** helps the flier's cause in all cases. However, if you're trying to sleep, chugging a quart of water just before takeoff is going to require a mid-flight trip to the toilet. Moderation is the answer here; drink enough water to stay hydrated, but not so much that you're traipsing up and down the aisle of the plane all night. One of the best ways to overcome jet lag is to stay hydrated during your flight.
2. **Sleep Aids** An eye mask, inflatable neck pillow, ear plugs, and other devices can help the cause greatly. Do not worry about looking funny; bloodshot eyes at your morning meeting look much worse. If you can fall asleep without the use of pharmaceutical sleep aids, you'll be much better off upon your arrival, as drugs can cause lingering drowsiness or sluggishness that make it hard for your body to reset its internal clock. Gentle aids, such as the motion sickness treatment Dramamine, can dramatically assist you in falling asleep, however, if you have serious difficulties sleeping on planes.
3. **Alcohol and Caffeine** If you are trying to sleep, neither alcohol nor caffeine will help the cause. Avoid both.
4. **Layovers** Eating is not advised, but you should drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. My approach is usually to brush my teeth, then head toward the gate, sit near a speaker or the agent, and put my head back and try to sleep some more. You might ask a gate agent to make sure you do not sleep through the flight departure. As a rule, carbohydrates make you sleepy; proteins and fats keep you awake. Bananas and milk are especially effective sleep-inducers.

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## *Surviving the Red-Eye (cont'd)*

1. **When You Arrive**, Raise the window shade when the plane lands. On a west to east flight, that first burst of light will have you blinking hard and miserably, but it will help mightily to reset your internal clock.
2. **Reset your watch** You need to start living by your new time zone. Reset your watch before you get off the plane. In fact, I prefer to reset my watch immediately after I board the last leg of my itinerary, as arrival times are always published in the destination time zone, and I know how long to my destination if I wake up and check the time. This can permit me to grab a few extra precious minutes of sleep.
3. **Begin your day** with familiar routines. Rather than indulging your body's clock, live by your watch. If it is 7AM after an eastbound flight, have breakfast, coffee, whatever you usually do at 7AM. Grab a newspaper if you typically read one every morning. You probably will not feel hungry yet, and the coffee might not go down as smoothly, but soon enough you'll be glad you're on schedule. If it is 2AM after a westbound flight, head straight for your hotel or home and go to sleep.

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## *Important Links*

1. <http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information> - This is excellent information for international travel published by the TSA. It gives detailed information on all aspects of international travel. Check with the Transportation Authority to read the regulations for carryon items.
2. <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/page/survival-guide.htm> - Great information on staying healthy and safe while traveling internationally.
3. <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/page/vaccinations.htm> - Center for Disease Control list of vaccinations needed by country.
4. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html> - Tips for Traveling Abroad is an excellent site for preparing for your vacation.
5. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/> - This is the State Departments travel warnings site. Be sure to visit this site right before your vacation to see if anything has changed that might affect your trip.
6. <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list> - Information regarding those locations requiring any kind of shots before visiting.
7. <https://help.cbp.gov/s/article/Article-3643?> - Information regarding a child traveling with only one parent or someone who is not a parent or legal guardian or a group.

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## *Vital Information*

U.S. citizens traveling outside the United States will need a valid U.S. passport... and there are a few other things we want to remind you of and would be happy to talk with you more in-depth.

1. **Visas:** Some countries require visas to enter. Without a valid visa, you may be denied entry into the country or even exit from the country. You can find out if you need a visa by visiting the embassy website of the country you'll be traveling to. And of course, you can always contact us with questions!
2. **Children Traveling** with One Parent, or Someone Who is Not a Parent/Legal Guardian, or Children Traveling in a Group: Foreign border officials may require custody documents and/or written consent from the other parent/both parents. While the requirements may vary by country, here's an example of what the [US requires](#).

**New Europe Visa Requirements** Starting January 1, 2021 Americans to Apply for EU Travel Authorization. US citizens will have to apply for an European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) prior to their travel. US passport holders will need to apply online for an entry permit in Europe before entering the area, similar to the ESTA that the United States use. This process allows EU authorities to pre-screen all travelers and confirm their status before permitting them entry or even to board a flight to Europe, thus improving security measures throughout Europe. US travelers will have to pay of €7 when applying for an ETIAS.

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