



NICK'S TRAVEL TIPS

Words of experience from visiting 29 countries, 28 states, and more than a dozen years living outside the US. Life is short and time is the one thing we can't get more of. The world is big and open so go and explore it!





Boracay, Philippines in 2008. Taken by Nicholus

Life's a Journey, Enjoy it.

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There is so much to do and see in the world and we live in an era where we are more connected than ever before. Explore the things around you and around the world. Time is the one thing in life that we can not get more of. Use your time on this earth wisely. Take a walk around your neighborhood, a drive around your city or to another state. Book a cruise to someplace warm, or a flight to another continent.

There are nearly 40,000 cities and counties in 50 states, and nearly 200 nations in the world, how many will you see? #YoLo

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Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.

-Mark Twain

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Metz, France in 2015. Taken by Nicholus



Let's get started!

Transportation and lodging are usually the most expensive part of the trip, so try and plan for those first. Playing with flight dates can result in big savings if you are flexible. Using Kayak Explore you can choose a month and price without specifying a destination and it will show you destination options. When booking tickets consider the following:

- Selecting a seat by an emergency exit can provide you with extra leg room.
- If you use the bathroom frequently consider a row by the bathrooms and an aisle seats.
- A row with 2 seats can accommodate a window person and a frequent bathroom person.



New Orleans, LA in 2010. Taken by Nicholus



Korea in 2006 and Afghanistan in 2008. Taken by Nicholas

- Before leaving the country during international travel be sure and check with your cell phone provider to see what kind of international plans they have. Sprint has (see if your phone carrier does) a free international roaming feature, a \$10 international unlimited texting feature, free wifi voice calling, and international data packages. These allowed us to stay in contact with friends and family at an affordable price while in Europe.
- Before traveling internationally ALWAYS call your bank and credit card providers. If a financial institution sees transactions in a country you are not from they will likely think your card was stolen and cancel it, or at least try and contact you to see if it is you. If you are out of the country they may not be able to call you. Call them before you leave and tell them where you are going and the dates you will be traveling. They can add a note on your account so someone will know it is you before you leave.
- Taking some time to learn the public transit system can be helpful depending on how long you are staying in a place.
- Taxis are the most expensive travel option, but are great if you are lost and not sure how to get back to a point of interest.
- When traveling internationally and you are not familiar with the language this is a great travel tip. Take pictures of Street signs, landmarks and signage of the place you are staying or where you park your car. If you ever get lost you can just show a local the picture and they can direct you back to where you want to go, or hop in a cab and have the driver take you there. No language skills required just your phone.
- Renting a car (with GPS and unlimited mileage) is well worth it to have maximum flexibility and freedom to travel in an area. It stopped us from being bound to a particular area, having to inconvenience others, and having to pay for expensive taxis. Be sure and check the driving laws regarding using a US license to drive in Europe. It can be done without issue, just be aware of date restrictions. Renting a car online with the features you need (manual vs automatic) before you leave for your trip is the best way to ensure you will be able to get a car.
- Ground transportation at your destination is another factor to look at. Renting a car vs Uber? If the destination is close to an area with the majority of attractions being visited, Uber is likely cheaper and more convenient.
- If driving calculate fuel costs and mileage and drive time. For flying also be mindful of flight time, airport time, arrival and departure times, as well as driving to and from airport.



Swaziland (Africa) in 2015. Taken by Nicholas

- Airbnb is a great way to stay. After you have identified a 'home base' to work from you can plan shorter trips to other cities or countries and save money and gain a great cultural onsite from your host. Asking for restaurant tips, transportation info and recreation ideas from locals is a great way to explore a new area.
- Consider AirBnB as well as Expedia for lodging. AirBnB is likely the cheapest option, but traditional hotels have more amenities for convenience. Be sure to read reviews of hosts on AirBnB.
- Using tech from home that you're already familiar with can be helpful. Google Maps has train information for some larger cities and trip advisor can give you some ideas of things to do and places to eat in your area.
- Interesting activities can be more rewarding than sightseeing based on personality and how long you are in an area. Taking a cooking or art class in a new place can be an interesting way to experience a culture. Intentionally seek experiences in addition to tourist activities. Take a class, learn something new, find an activity that you want to try at your destination.
- If shipping from a military base, consider these as an option. Flying on Delta (currently) we are each allowed one bag up to 50lbs. Bringing an extra bag costed us \$100 on the way here. We shipped two 70lb trunks for about \$35 each Priority Mail . Shipping from an APO/AE address is the same as sending it from the states.
- Is train or bus an option? Consider both cost and travel time. You may save on one and loose on the other, but because the journey is as important as the destination, a long scenic trip may be a good thing if you have the time.
- Portable chargers are a great investment for long trips. They can ensure your phone doesn't die at an inconvenient time and can compensate for gps use and extra use.



Washington DC in 2011, Africa and Europe in 2015. Taken by Nicholas

Tips for flying from a frequent flyer:

The last 10 years (since 2006) I have flown on more than a dozen international flights and more than 30 domestic flights. These are things that I do when I fly.

- Be sure and stay hydrated, especially on long flights. Dehydration can lead to cramps and make jetlag last longer. Drink lots of water.
- Bring an empty water bottle with you to the airport. You can not bring liquids past security, but you can bring an empty bottle. Buying water in the airport is overpriced but there are usually water fountains. After getting past your security screening, save money and stay hydrated by filling up your empty bottle.
- When flying be sure and wear comfortable clothes if you are going to have enough time to change clothes once you arrive at your destination. Sweat or athletic pants mean that you wouldn't have a belt to take off at security. Flip flops mean that you wouldn't have to spend time taking off or putting on your shoes at the checkpoint.
- When you arrive at the airport, after you get your boarding passes but before you go towards security, take all of the items you have on you and in your pockets and put them inside your carry on bag. Keep your id or passport and tickets in your hands. Don't be the guy who has to spend time digging change out of their pockets to put on the conveyor belt or setting off the metal detector. Taking a few moments before you approach security will save you minutes once you get there.
- If you are traveling internationally across several time zones try this tip for beating jet lag. When you get to the airport set your clocks to the local time you are flying to and begin eating and sleeping based on that timezone. By using your flight time to adjust you ensure that you do not have to waste time on your trip getting your schedule on track. On the way back do the same thing so you will be ready for your regular routine when you get home.
- Depending on the length and type of trip you are taking, consider a day's worth of clothing in your carry on bag. If the airline misplaces your luggage you will always have an extra set of clothes to work with. Having your hygiene products with you is a good idea for the same reason.
- To cut down on the number of papers you have to carry while dealing with the hustle and bustle of the airport, take a picture of your bag receipts when you check your bags. In the event that your bags are misplaced you wouldn't have to worry about tracking the scraps of paper with your bag information once you arrive at your destination. Just use the picture you took on your phone.

Update Dec2018 new tips

- TSA precheck rocks, good for 5 years, a significant time saver on US airports
- A Dual sim phone allows you to have both your home carrier service and a local phone provider.
- Chatsim is a service which charges only dollars per year and allows you unlimited texting to and from your phone on multiple chatting apps. To view the apps and countries it works in by visiting their website. Your US phone needs to be unlocked by your carrier to be used with the SIM card of another carrier.
- Second level on a two story plane: Generally speaking if a plane has two floors of seating, the top floor is more narrow and holds fewer people. If you have the ability to select your seat there you will have more room, less people to share the bathrooms with, and typically each row of seats only has 2 positions (meaning that you will have either a window or aisle seat because there aren't middle seats.)
- When traveling internationally go to the furthest immigration line because it's usually shorter.
- When traveling with a US passport know which nation's don't require a visa
- There are missionary/humanitarian ticket rates by some airlines (British airways)

Tips for flying

- Especially when going to an airport you are unfamiliar with, look up the route from where you are leaving from to the airport so that you can estimate the drive time so you won't be late.
- If you know that you will have a layover for several hours in an unfamiliar airport, it is worth downloading a picture image of the airport map so that you can navigate to food, bathrooms, shops, and other amenities you may wish to use.
- Once you have cleared security it is important that you first go directly to your departure gate. Do this before stopping for food or the bathroom. Once you are positive where your gate is you can see if there is any information about boarding time which may have changed. On your way to the gate take note of the bathrooms and restaurants you pass so that you will be aware of your options and how close they are.
- When dining at a restaurant in the airport before your flight always order your food to go. If you end up finishing your meal at the restaurant it is no big deal that you ordered it to go. However if you run out of time or don't finish all of your food it is already ready to go with you on the plane.
- Directly after placing your order ask for the bill. The sooner you pay for it the more time you will have at the end of your dining experience.
- Before giving your checked baggage to the airline to store take a picture of it. In the event that it gets lost you will have your baggage claim slip, but having picture may help locate it faster. Also be sure to take a picture of your baggage claim slip so that if you lose the paper copy you will still have the tracking number.

**“The More We Travel,
The Smaller The World Gets”**
