

# Travel *tips*

## How to be a More Organized Tourist

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Haven't you always wanted to be more like those people who have their vacations planned to a "T", knowing where they are supposed to be at any given moment, what hotel(s) they are staying at every night and timing their day with a stop watch to make sure they stay on track? Sure, this method allows you to pack the most into your trip and ensures it goes off without a hitch – but I don't believe you need to be that meticulous to make sure your vacation runs smoothly. However, in my time working with tourists and being an avid tourist myself, I have come to learn that there are some great tips that can help your vacation run smoothly, while still allowing for spontaneity and last minute adventures without turning you into a vacation drill sergeant.

### Use Your Resources

Once you have chosen your vacation destination, its time to start planning. But there's no need to go overboard here. Throw in your color-coded binder full of hours of research on your destination and make the experts do it for you. Every state has its own tourism bureau staffed with experts on travel to that area. Simply give them a call or send them an email, tell them what part of the state you are visiting, and they can direct you to the visitor bureau that can provide you with oodles of free goodies ranging from visitor's guides to maps to coupons for popular attractions. To find the tourism bureau in the state you will be visiting try [www.towd.com](http://www.towd.com), the Tourism Offices Worldwide Directory Web site.

### Reserve In Advance

You may be surprised as to how many travelers show up at their destination without a hotel room booked and expect to be able to find reputable accommodations on-the-spot. Think again. The high season for travel is the summer months, also the time when most state and area festivals and events are happening, including holiday celebrations like Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and Labor Day. Not to mention, sports

tournaments are popular in the summer months as well. These create for a hotel-booking nightmare if you don't plan in advance. Just showing up could cause you to get stuck in something similar to the Bates' Motel if you aren't careful!

### How Do I Get Around?

This is something I see over and over again, travelers trying to decide which mode of transportation they will utilize on their vacation. With the price of rental cars and gas these days, trying to find alternative means of getting around is not such a bad idea. But this question really depends on what city you will be visiting. Spend the weekend in Las Vegas and taxicabs are the way to go. But take a trip up to Seattle and a rental car is your best bet if you want to visit memorable sights like Mt. Rainier or the San Juan Islands. Besides researching the types of transportation available at your destination, I can tell you this, when looking to rent a car, remember that renting from airport sites will cost you more in taxes. The Airport Concession Fee can cost you up to 10 percent more if you rent from an airport location verses an offsite location.

### How's The Weather?

One question I hear more than most is "How will the weather be when I get there?" If you are traveling to a destination that you have never been to, that is a great question. The key is to ask people that live in the area or visit there often. They will know the weather best. Then, I would turn to the weather report. Check it right before you leave to get the most accurate account for packing purposes. If you plan to be at your destination for a week or more, the Web site [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) will let you type in the city you want to go to and view the temperature and precipitation averages for any month throughout the year.

### Have Fun And Be Spontaneous!

The best vacations are the ones that are planned out with daily activities, but with



wiggle room to add in those unexpected sights that you didn't know about. When you arrive at your destination, visit the nearest visitor center. Sometimes they are at the airport and sometimes they are just off the freeway a few minutes away. The staff at these centers knows the area by the back of their hands. They can provide suggestions and ideas for things to do that you may not have thought of.

Remember, a vacation is for relaxing. There's no need to spend hours planning and stressing over how it will go. Just follow these few important tips and it will be sure to go smoothly. And don't forget to ask questions. Want to know the best place in town to eat, enjoy a show, or take a tour? Ask your taxi driver, ask your hotel front desk, ask a fellow tourist, or better yet a local, and you can be sure that your vacation will be everything but dull!