

Travel Advice

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This happens because the PDF makers have been too preoccupied with trying to keep Dick Cheney from hacking into their websites and stealing all their money and they haven't had time to figure out this link mess.

I'm writing this because I'm dumb and I have a PhD in screw-up. I have been traveling, all over the world (speak Seven languages-no big deal in Europe); especially Europe, since I was a teenager (mid 70s now) and, at one time or other, I've done just about all the dumb things that a traveler can do.

Having learned (the hard way) from all my mistakes, I want to pass on some advice for my fellow travelers from the USA.

First and foremost, do everything, well in advance, here! If you are doing a tour/cruise (good idea), they will do most things for you but whatever they don't do, you do. Write out your itinerary including everywhere you're going and everything you will do e.g.:

1. Reservations-lodging mostly

2. Tickets-airline, ship-boat, museum, train, bus, theatre etc.
3. Rental- car, bicycle, boat, apartment.....anything rentable.
4. Money exchange: Get some cash- foreign currency (Countries) in the states. Not a lot, but enough to deal with small stuff when you first arrive at your destinations e.g. vending machines; tips etc. Avoid ATMs outside of US. When you have money business, do it in banks. Credit cards are ok but find out which ones are most acceptable in the countries you plan to visit. Traveler's checks are safe enough but not always easy to use (accepted etc.). Paradoxically, American Express offices are more helpful in emergencies than US consulates or embassies - they don't care at all about you. But AE credit cards are often a problem-
Research..... it.
5. Maps, books, travel guides etc. **AAA** is a good source.
6. Map out (computer maps help e.g. **<https://goo.gl/TWHMGL>**) your whole trip e.g. city/town to city/town, walking distance - hotel to stations, markets, museums etc.

You do everything here for several reasons: Once there, you're at their mercy. And, trying to figure out where you are (train/bus stations, walking) can be a stressful mess if you don't already have your little maps etc. Also, they (hotels, car rental, tickets etc.) want to keep themselves booked as solidly, and as much ahead as they can, so they offer the best deals here.

Next: Since first learning about him 30+ years ago, I've been using Rick Steve's books and they have never failed me.

<http://www.ricksteves.com/>

Pickpockets and thieves: It varies greatly from country to country but all have them e.g. Japan and Northern Europe, not as many, Mediterranean (southern Europe) countries = abundant!

Northern and Southern Europe: From **chaos to order**. Beginning at the southern most parts of Western Europe, you will begin with, what seems to you to be, chaos. Italians and Spaniards love their car horns and drive worse than New Yorkers, train schedules are erratic, airport and train station workers (and everybody else) may be on strike and you may get stuck who know where etc. As you go north e.g. Northern Italy and Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Germany etc., streets and yards are clean and neat, trains run on time, drivers on Autobahns/Autostradas go as fast as race cars but are, mostly, courteous. Learn about how to pay at toll gates-toll roads before getting on them or you might backup a lot of traffic behind you (horns honking) while trying to figure it out. By the time you get to Scandinavia, everything is well organized, **and**, most Scandinavians speak good English.

Pack light! If traveling in winter, you need some layers (sweater is good) but don't bring several different coat styles to be fashionable. Depending on your activities, you might need something a little formal, but one suit/evening

dress is enough. You probably need only a sport coat and tie, or ladies equivalent. For 2-3 week trips, one change of underwear/socks is enough.....you can wash them in your room. Check with airport security about cosmetics/toiletries etc. They will take a lot of stuff away from you if it's not allowed.

If you're poor, like me, you might want to consider:

1. US Dollar up against money where you're going is **best** time to go there.
2. If not on a tour, get rooms with kitchenettes. Eat in room saves money and is sometimes fun-adventure. If you **like to cook**, you can learn more from grandmothers than chefs, but chefs are usually flattered if you ask.
3. Find out where locals shop and "**When in Rome**" e.g. **Aldi, Lidl** etc.
4. If you really want to understand cultures, find out what they **grow-catch-eat**. Museums are part of your trip but **Farmer's and Seafood markets** are more informative and fun. Take some back to your kitchenette.
5. Language: Learn this essential phrase: "How do you say?" e.g. Come si dice?, Wie sagt man?, Comment dites-vous ?, ¿Cómo se dice ? Point at stuff and use the phrase. Carry a little notepad and write down the answers. Talk to everybody e.g. busboys/girls, store clerks, gardeners, whoever is sitting near you on trains/buses etc. Don't worry about your accent. They

are flattered that you are trying and will help you.

<https://goo.gl/oEykSY>

6. Bring, and don't forget to carry with you when walking, little [drugstore masks](#). Lots of germs on crowded subways; buses etc. Getting a bug can really screw-up your trip. If you get one, ask local drugstores for cheapest ([local clinics](#)) way to deal with it.
7. [Money Belt](#): And even if you're not poor, get one! When out and about, keep **ALL** valuables e.g. passport, money, credit cards etc. in it and beware of [con artists](#). Don't take out and/or show anything to anybody you don't absolutely trust.
8. Check with [Rick](#) for other good stuff.

Example:

[http://geriatricgourmet.com/files/Cuatro Alamos Summer 2013 part one .pdf](http://geriatricgourmet.com/files/Cuatro%20Alamos%20Summer%202013%20part%20one.pdf)

Note: If you're a guy, your wife is probably wiser than you (no doubt about mine), so consult with her about everything.