

I+L | Travel Tips

25 Travel Hacks That Will Save You Time and Money in 2017

by Talia Avakian January 31, 2017



Justin Baillie via Getty Images

It's National Plan For Vacation Day. So what are you waiting for?

Expert travelers like flight attendants and frequent fliers know that foreign transaction fees, the dreaded middle seat, and flight delays can put a damper even on an otherwise perfectly planned vacation.

To help you travel better in 2017, we've compiled our favorite travel hacks we learned this year. You'll navigate airports masterfully, save money on trip changes and cancellations, uncover real-time hotel discounts, and find yourself with more time (and money) when you finally arrive.

For Booking Flights

Set up price alerts.

If you know where you want to go, and you are at least a few months out, now may not be the best time to buy. Download the [Hopper app](#) and do a search on [Google Flights](#), and if the price isn't yet right, set an alert. This is also a reminder to Always Be Planning.)

Sign up for airline emails.

Sign up from airlines newsletters: JetBlue, for example, frequently sends out flash sale emails. Similarly, following airlines on social media can help you stay in the loop with quick sales and promotions. Also, websites like [Airfarewatchdog](#) are great for finding top-notch flight prices, thanks to flight-tracker alerts that notify you when prices drop.

Book in a private browser or clear your cookies.

When starting your flight search, make sure to either clear your cookies or to slip into "incognito mode" on Google Chrome. When you conduct searches, sites store your cookies (details of your web browsing) and can even use them to hike up the prices of flights once they know you're interested in that route. By going stealth, you can avoid purchasing an unnecessarily expensive ticket.

Take advantage of free stopovers.

Free stopovers give you the chance to get two trips out of one vacation: without paying twice as much for flights. A number of airlines offer stopover programs, though one of the best known is Icelandair. You can extend your layover in Iceland for up to seven days (at no additional cost) and the airline will even pair you up with a complimentary Stopover Buddy to take you to the best local spots in town.

With Finnair, you can spend up to five nights doing everything from chasing the Northern Lights to exploring the city's food scene, while stopovers in Singapore from Singapore Airlines include a night's hotel stay and airport transfer for just \$60.

Get the perfect seat.

Where you sit on a flight can make all the difference. [SeatGuru](#) helps savvy travelers examine every detail of an airplane seat before it's too late to make a change. Find out whether you'll be close to a bathroom, if you can count on power outlets, what the seat pitch is, or if that seat will recline. There are user reviews so you can get a sense of what the experience was like for other travelers.

Use the 24-hour rule.

Take advantage of the [24-hour rule](#), which allows travelers to cancel tickets on most airlines without a fee within 24 hours of booking. In 2017, check one last time for a better price, or jump on a flash airfare sale—even if you still need to ask your boss for time off.

For Packing



Andrew Bret Wallis via Getty Images

Keep instant oatmeal in a bag for an easy breakfast.

Grace Antipala, who has been a flight attendant with Hawaiian Airlines since 2011, recommends keeping instant oatmeal in a Ziploc bag along with your preferred toppings

(dried fruit, nuts, brown sugar). During meal service, ask your flight attendant for hot water and prepare your healthy meal in a coffee cup.

Try peppermint essential oil.

Antipala also carries a small bottle of peppermint essential oil with her on flights. She told T+L the oil is "great for nausea during a flight, freshen[s] your breath, and helps with odors from the flight." Antipala will also dab a few drops onto a napkin and take a sniff to clear her sinuses. We love the travel-friendly [Peppermint Halo Wand by Saje](#) (\$27).

Stay organized with collapsing laundry bags.

Taking a collapsible laundry bag can help you keep dirty clothes organized during your trip—and separated from other items on the way back. You can also opt for a [waterproof version](#), which is perfect for stowing a damp bathing suit after a last minute run to the beach on your way to the airport.

Carry a hydrating face spray.

Another product Antipala regularly takes on flights is the [AmorePacific face spray](#) (\$35), which comes in a TSA-approved 2.7 ounce bottle.

“The first ingredient in it isn't water, but bamboo sap, so there are more essential oils to keep you hydrated and moisturized throughout your flight,” said Antipala.

Ship your packages beforehand.

To avoid having a longer wait time at airport security and using precious storage space for gifts, [ship your luggage](#) out before flying.

Invest in a multi-purpose jacket.

Antipala also recommends packing a light jacket, like the [Uniqlo Ultra Light Down Parka](#) (\$80).

This thin-yet-cozy, water-resistant coat squishes easily into an included pouch. “I use it as a pillow,” said Antipala, “and always pack in no matter where I go since there can be cold snaps.”

For the Airport



stereostok via Getty Images

Pre-order a meal at the airport.

Use the [Grab app](#) to pre-order a meal of your choice at the airport, and have it ready for you when you arrive. The app allows you to search restaurants that are nearby your terminal, as well as those on the way to your gate. It's available at more than 40 airports in the U.S.

Freeze your water.

You know you can't bring a bottle of water through airport security—unless you freeze it.

Easily access Wi-Fi.

If you want Wi-Fi on the flight (and your airline doesn't offer it for free, like JetBlue or Virgin America), buy it before you board. You'll save money and make a more rational decision on what you can and should pay for internet access.

Also take advantage of [this handy map](#) with Wi-Fi information from airports around the world, created by travel blogger and computer security engineer Anil Polat.

Ask for free in-flight items to keep the kids entertained.

Traveling with children can be tough, but airlines—thankfully!—have an array of free games and activities for kids. These freebies range from items like coloring books and puzzles aboard Lufthansa to ukuleles on select Hawaiian Airlines flights.

Get a complimentary drink.

Several airlines, believe it or not, continue to offer complimentary alcoholic beverages for economy passengers. Consider flying with [Air Canada](#), which offers a selection of spirits on international flights, [Etihad Airways](#), which offers, wines, and spirits, and [KLM](#), among others.

Easily rebook a delayed or canceled flight.

Dealing with canceled or delayed flights can be a headache. That's where [Freebird](#) comes in, offering travelers a free and quick travel protection option. For a flat fee of \$19 for one-way flights and \$34 for round-trip flights, travelers will be alerted if their flights is delayed or canceled. When that happens, Freebird delivers options to book another available flight, which can be done on mobile without ever waiting in line.

For When You're on the Road

Rent a car from Costco.

If you're heading on a road trip and need to rent a car, take a look at the options [Costco](#) has to offer (stay with us). The wholesale club store boasts a Low Price Finder tool to see what coupons, codes, and discounts are available for your desired vehicle. Additionally, if you're a member, you'll get an additional driver fee waived in the U.S. and in Canada for [Alamo](#) or [Enterprise](#), and in the U.S. for [Avis](#) or [Budget](#).

Put your flight number down on your car rental booking.

Adding your flight number can serve as an extra precaution should you have an issue with your flight. With the flight information included, the car rental company will know if you'll be arriving late, should your flight get canceled or delayed. It's one less thing to worry about in a stressful situation.

Find hotel discounts in real-time.

Priceline recently released a new feature on its [free iPhone app](#), Road Deals, that enables travelers to get real-time information on discounts and deals for hotels along their route. The hotels are automatically updated as you go along your journey, with the option to make a booking in seconds. Simply put in your preferred budget and number of stars, and the app will take care of finding the best options for you.

For When You've Arrived

Use the right cards.

Traveling internationally? You need credit and debit cards that don't charge foreign transaction fees. Consider the [Charles Schwab debit card](#), and the [Chase Sapphire Preferred credit card](#). It's an excellent travel credit card, with zero foreign transaction fees, a \$3,000 reimbursement for lost luggage, rental car insurance, and a 1:1 point transfer with major partners like Hyatt, Marriott, and Southwest.

Avoid unnecessary expenses.

Different countries vary in what they do and don't charge for. Water at restaurants is one excellent example: In Spain, a waiter might automatically bring a bottle of water that'll cost you when the check comes. Do some research ahead of time on norms in your destination.

Look into city passes.

Traveling to a major urban center? Opting for a city pass can help you save if you want to hit up the popular tourist attractions. [Paris' Museum Pass](#), for example, will get you free entry into more than 60 popular museums and monuments in the city, while [Florence's Firenze Card](#) grants you access to all the major museums in Italy.

Find free activities.

There are fantastic free activities in every city—if you know where to look. City tourism websites are often a great way to locate a city's top free sights and activities, including walking tours you can take whether you're in [New York City](#) or [Amsterdam](#). Many museums in different cities offer free days (like in [Madrid](#) on Sundays).

