151 tips
for women travelers
edited by Carol English Ferullo

tried-and-true travel wisdom by, for, and about women
Dedicated to the women of Vantage Deluxe World Travel—intrepid travelers, associates, and worldwide colleagues whose spirit of discovery inspired this book.

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On the cover: Vantage traveler Debi Tepper captures the floral brilliance of the gardens at Keukenhof, Holland.
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Fran leaned back at her desk, lit a cigarette, inhaled deeply, and then said in her raspy voice "Here’s a tip, sweetie. Take advantage of every opportunity you have to travel. Every one. When you figure out ‘where to next,’ come back and see me and I’ll tell you what I know."

I’ll never forget my first boss in the travel industry. Fran Greenberg was smart, tough, funny, and full of life. She’d been to every place I’d ever heard of (and many I’d never heard of), and the only thing she loved more than traveling was talking about traveling. At 24, working in a small travel agency in my home town, I was in love with the idea of visiting faraway places, but didn’t have a clue how to make it happen. Fran got me started with plenty of great travel tips (many of which appear in this booklet), and once I started exploring, like Fran, I made it a point to share what I’d learned with other women travelers.

I still do – and no doubt, you do, too, if you are a woman who loves traveling. It never fails…. Get a few of us together, and before you know it, we’re chatting about the places we’ve been, the places on our to-do lists, and enthusiastically trading tips about what to see and do, how to prepare, how to save money, how to be safe — you name it.

To be honest, while I always enjoy these conversations with other women, it hadn’t occurred to me to gather our collective wisdom in a more formal way. Like many good ideas that spring up here at Vantage, that one came from our travelers. It happened last summer in Budapest, where I’d gone to celebrate the inaugural of Vantage’s new ship, the ms River Discovery II.

At a welcome reception I meandered over to a group of women guests, and the inevitable ice-breaker “So, where have you traveled?” got us started. As we sat down for dinner, of course, the conversation turned to food – where to find the best pastries in Budapest, how to make pho like they do in Vietnam, what restaurants to try in Lyon, and so on. After dessert, one woman, Eleanor, said she wanted to stop back at her cabin to fetch a sweater. We all tagged along, curious to see her suite, and soon, the ladies were educating one of my colleagues (a newcomer to river cruising) on the fine points of choosing the best cabin.

The night before our trip ended, we all reunited for a farewell drink. Sandra (a single traveler and retired teacher from St. Louis) joked that she was having a hard time fitting all her shopping finds in her suitcase. Of course, she received four or five packing tips, which prompted her to say “You know, somebody really oughtta be writing all this down.” And that was how we finally decided to capture all this collective wisdom!

When we returned to Boston we asked all our female associates to share their “tricks of the trade.” We got in touch with some of our most seasoned world travelers — Dee Bowers, Maca Simpson,
June Spargo, and Norma Barton – and asked for essential advice to pass on. (Meet them on pages 12, 20, 37, and 63.) Our trusty female Program Managers and Discovery Leaders from around the world chimed in, too.

So here you have it: 151 tried-and-true travel tips by, for, and about the women of Vantage Deluxe World Travel. We’ve covered everything from how to multi-purpose dental floss to exchanging currency … how to invite company, and how to deter it … Laundry tips for the gal on the go, and what not to wear in Germany. I like to say it has everything a savvy woman traveler needs to know. Do you have a girlfriend who loves traveling as much as you do? A daughter planning a big anniversary trip? A niece graduating from college who’s headed for a summer in Europe? Then here is a great gift to pass on that is at once practical, and inspirational.

Inspiration comes in many forms. When I was a little girl I’d sit on the beach at Winthrop, Massachusetts, watching the planes fly in and out of nearby Logan Airport, and promising myself “one day I’m going to be on those planes.” Later, I was inspired by my family, by mentors like Fran, and of course, by you – the women travelers of Vantage Deluxe World Travel!

The truth is, you inspire all of us here at Vantage to do a better job: every day, through your letters, surveys, emails, Facebook posts, phone calls, and Tweets, your feedback helps us continually improve the trips we offer. We do listen to you, and act on your advice. So keep it coming!

And keep sharing your passion for discovery with other women. Your words might help change someone’s life, just as Fran’s did mine. And the more we explore and understand other cultures, the better our world will be. So pass on your excitement, your joy, your tips, your stories. After all, the best thing to do with a good idea is to pay it forward.

Warmly,

Carol English Ferullo
Senior Vice President, Worldwide Operations
Vantage Deluxe World Travel
Getting Prepared

1. **Passports are required for all travel outside the United States**, and many countries require that your passport be valid for six months after your return, so make sure yours is up to date. While most transactions can be done by mail, it generally takes at least four to six weeks for routine applications, two to three weeks for expedited service (at an additional cost.) If you need it within two weeks, you’ll have to apply in person, by appointment, at your Regional Passport Agency. There are many private passport services, but the official National Passport Information Center of the U.S. government is www.travel.state.gov, or call 1-877-487-2778.

2. **Find out if you need a visa.** Some countries require a visa to enter, and since processing times vary, allow 120 days to get yours in order. Vantage automatically provides the necessary information and forms for individual visas if one is required for the country you’re visiting. If your travel company doesn’t offer this service, use a visa service or apply directly through the embassy or consulate. To find out country-specific requirements and the nearest embassy or consulate locations, visit the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov and click on “International Travel.” Here you’ll see the A-Z index of countries. When you select the one you’ll be traveling to, you’ll find all the basic entry and exit requirements, plus directions and urls for obtaining your visa.

“*If we learn to think of it as anticipation, as learning, as growing, if we think of the time we spend waiting for the big things of life as an opportunity… what wonderful horizons open out!*”

— **Anna Neagle**

3. **Make photocopies of your passport and other important documents.** Give a copy to a trusted friend or relative, keep a hard copy at home, and take one with you during your trip.

— Ashley Rivas, Oakland, CA, Vantage traveler

   **Editor’s Note:** Great idea, Ashley. You can also use your printer’s scanner or a digital camera to photograph your documents, then email the images to yourself and/or save a copy to your hard drive or a USB thumb drive (which, by the way, is the easiest thing to carry in your purse!)

4. **Give the “heads up” to your local bank and credit card companies.** Make sure they know you are traveling, what countries you are visiting, and how long you will be using your ATM or credit cards overseas. Otherwise, they might freeze your card if they detect unusual spending patterns. Some banks automatically block U.S. debit card use in certain countries (including the United Kingdom) to protect against fraud—unless you expressly request it. Also, scrutinize your statement when you come home, to make sure no unscrupulous charges appear.

5. **Decide about cellphone coverage.** Most cellular providers offer international calling plans, but before purchasing one, consider what your real needs might be. Plans can be costly, and coverage can be sketchy. It’s often cheaper to text messages instead, avoiding high roaming charges. If you want the phone primarily to make local calls while abroad, you may be better off buying or renting a cellphone once you
2. Learning About Your Destination

“Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.”

— Chinese Proverb

Margarita “Maca” Simpson
Arlington, MA
16-time Vantage Traveler

Maca took her first Vantage trip in 2003, and since then has joined us on all seven continents. “They’ve opened the doors to the world,” she says “with kindness and attention.” It’s the personal attention that makes her comfortable recommending Vantage to women contemplating solo travel. “They treat you royally,” she says, adding that other travelers will look out for you. A former bilingual education teacher, Maca relishes the cultural interactions she has on her trips — be it meeting with Eastern European students or sharing lunch with New Zealand ranchers. Her best travel tip: “If you extend yourself, all of a sudden you will find a friend.”

7. Get the inside scoop from local women. HER-mail is a great free resource that puts women travelers in touch with local women, who serve as “mentors” sharing the ins and outs of their home city. You simply log on, indicate where you are traveling, and HERmail provides female contacts in that area. An email box will pop up where you can type in a request: “looking for a good hairdresser in Prague,” or “where is the best place to shop for cookware in Lyon?” After you make the initial contact, you are free to correspond directly with your HERmail mentor. Many women have even met their HERmail mentors face-to-face, and enjoyed making a great new friend overseas. At press time, there were more than 15,500 HERmail representatives in 35 countries. www.HERmail.com
— Susan Tam, Vantage Email Marketing Manager

8. Find out what holidays coincide with your trip. It can be extra rewarding to experience holiday traditions in another country. On the other hand, it can be extra frustrating to arrive at a much anticipated museum, only to find that it’s closed for a holiday. So do your homework in advance. A good website is www.qppstudio.net, whose immense database lists state, religious, and traditional holidays for about 250 countries and semi-autonomous territories.

*Editor’s Note:* Don’t forget to also visit our new Community pages at www.vantagetravel.com. Here you’ll find plenty of forums, photos, stories, videos, and more, posted by seasoned travelers who have been to the places you’re interested in and have plenty of knowledge to share.

10. **Study the travel brochures carefully.** Do some comparison shopping before you plonk down your money, and make sure you know what is and isn’t included in the cost of your trip. For example, the language used may imply whether a tour is merely “available” at your choosing (i.e., an optional tour at added cost), or included in the cost of your trip. Count up how many meals are included, verify that all admission fees are covered, and verify that your hotels are conveniently located near the things you want to see and do. And be certain to review your provider’s Tour Participant Agreement and its cancellation policy. Find out if your travel company offers a travel protection plan to cover you in case you need to cancel your trip or come home early.

— Xuan Luo, Vantage Cost Analyst

*Editor’s Note:* Vantage Deluxe World travel offers a 100% Travel Protection Plan that is one of the most comprehensive available, including trip cancellation protection as well as primary medical coverage. (Remember, Medicare and many private insurance plans do not cover you overseas.) Refer to the index on page 68 for some more useful tips on shopping for a travel company.

11. **Bring several forms of money.** Determine how much you think you’ll need, and then bring it in a mix of cash, credit cards, and your ATM card.

12. **What kind of currency should you carry?** Some travelers prefer to get a small amount of cash in the local currency before they leave. This makes sense if you’re arriving late at night (when exchange kiosks at the airport may be closed), or if you’ll be pressed for time to make connections once you arrive. Your bank may not have the currency you need readily available, so check at least a week in advance. Just exchange a small amount—enough to cover your first 12-24 hours, as you’ll pay a premium for foreign currency at home.

— Karen Johnson, Vantage Sr. Accountant

13. **Bring small bills.** Wherever I go I carry local currency in small denominations for tips and small daily expenses. I keep my “tip stash” separate in a plastic pouch. For small cash transactions, U.S. dollars are often accepted outside western Europe (and in particular, outside EU countries.) I take a stack of singles—between $50 and $100—to use as a backup when I’ve run out of local currency and need something for porter tips, cab fare, or maid tips. When haggling in
local markets, paying in U.S. dollars can sometimes be a bargaining chip. Make sure the dollar bills are clean, crisp, and new. In some countries (like China and Burma), they will only accept new issue bills, and will reject any bills with wrinkles or stains.
— Lisa Lovett-Thompson, Vantage Accounts Payable Supervisor

14. **Forget about travelers’ checks.** Fewer and fewer establishments accept them, and cashing them in at local banks or exchange services can be a serious time drain.

15. **Use your ATM/debit card** to withdraw cash, which will be dispensed in the local currency. ATM machines are available all over the world, and when you make an ATM debit withdrawal, you benefit from the wholesale exchange rate banks use. The fees charged are usually less than what you’d end up paying at an exchange bureau or at the bank teller window (or at your hotel). Most ATMs work like your hometown machines do, and almost always have a button for English-language directions. When you get home, you’ll have a handy record of all your expenditures with each charge itemized in your bank statement.
— Heidi Lewis, Vantage Production Director

16. **Know your numbers.** Be sure you know your pin number in numerals: some foreign bank machines only have numbers on the keypad (not letters). So if your secret pin is a word, be sure you know the corresponding numerals.

17. **Debit card vs credit card?** It’s usually better to use your debit card to make ATM withdrawals, as credit card withdrawals are technically “cash advances” that are subject to an additional fee. Check with your bank to see if you can pre-pay the account to avoid this fee. Otherwise, stick with the debit card. Check with your bank in advance to clarify how they will levy fees. Some banks charge a $2-$5 flat rate for each transaction, and may also add a conversion fee of 1-3%. Some U.S. banks now partner with overseas chains, and therefore have lower fees. It’s best not to make many small withdrawals, but to take out a large enough sum to cover several days at a time. Just be sure not to over-withdraw if you are visiting multiple countries, lest you be left with leftover currency that needs to be re-converted.
— Marlene Maloon, Vantage Lead Yield Management

18. **Protect your card’s magnetic stripe.** Ladies, does your purse have a magnetic closure? Be careful to keep your bank and credit away from this, as it can cause the information encoded on the back of your card to be damaged. Ditto for cellphones. If your card is on the counter when a cashier is deactivating the security device on a new purchase, it can also ruin your card. Other culprits include X-rays, refrigerator magnets, and passing though airport security scanners. The protective sleeves that banks provide with your cards can save you this trouble – ask your teller for a few extra ones before you leave.

19. **Take two credit cards, no more.** Bring one card from a major credit card company, and another as a backup in case your main card gets lost or stolen. You don’t need more than this. Take one card with you when you are out and about, and leave the other in your hotel safe.

20. **Email savings abroad.** I’m a big fan of Groupon, LivingSocial, and any of the online discount/coupon services. Recently I discovered that there are versions of these online coupon sites all over the world that offer great deals on restaurants, entertainment, and other services. Going to France? Try www.Groupon.fr. In New Zealand, its www.GrabOne.co.nz. The Groupon subsidiary www.citydeal.com offers discounts in several major European locations.
— Lorrie Wright, Vantage Sr. Director of Worldwide Operations

**Editor's Note:** Since Groupon acquired the German-based CityDeal in 2010, they have been gradually rebranding their sites. If you have a hard time finding the CityDeal site for your destination, try googling “Groupon Turkey,” “Groupon Austria,” etc.
4. Packing

21. Packing rule of thumb #1: Take half.
Lay everything you’ve decided to pack on the bed, then take only half of it. It’s harder to do than it sounds. But you’ll be glad you did it when you are lugging that heavy suitcase around the airport.

22. Packing rule of thumb #2: Take one for three.
That is, take one outfit for every three days of travel. If you are not going to wear something this many times, you should consider leaving it home.

23. Protect your belongings from humidity.
I once had to toss a whole bottle of coated aspirin caplets because they had gotten moist and all stuck together. Since then, I save those little packets of silica gel beads that come in the box when you buy shoes, electronics or other household items. I keep medicines in a Ziploc bag and toss in a silica packet. I also toss a few into my suitcase (and especially, my camera bag) to prevent moisture buildup.
— Rene Richardson, Vantage Flight Watch Supervisor

24. Copy your itinerary and leave it on top of your packed items. This way, if your luggage does get lost or delayed, the airline knows where to find you.
— Joan Cann, Vantage Air Operations Flights Agent

25. Keep your nightgown and toiletry bag near the top of your suitcase. When you arrive at your hotel late at night and are dog-tired from a long day of travel, the last thing you want to do is have to rummage through your bag (sometimes in the dark) to find your essentials.

26. Keep things fresh with fabric softener sheets. They keep your suitcase and clothes fresh and clean, reduce static cling, and get rid of musty smells if anything gets damp. Upon arrival, I place one in the closet of my hotel room, and in the drawers of my bureau. When I get home, I put dryer sheets in my empty luggage before storing.

27. Sweet-smelling luggage. You know those pesky paper perfume samples they stick in magazines? Put them in your suitcases in between trips along with the plastic bags you use for packing. It makes the bags smell nice and keeps them from getting musty in storage. Leave the perfume samples in and then use them as perfume for travel. Just rub them on—no need for bottles of perfume. Just use them and toss!

28. Prevent wrinkles. Save those plastic dry-cleaner bags. You can lay them flat and slip a blouse or two, a dress or two, or a few pairs of slacks in each bag. Then fold in half, squeezing out the air, or roll up. The plastic prevents clothes from bunching up. Instead, the bags just slide off each other, and your clothes arrive wrinkle free. Placing thin plastic sheets or tissue paper between layers of clothing will achieve the same thing.
— Tara Fanning, Vantage Product Manager

“Travel light and travel simple, in your mind and through your world....”
— Buffy Saint-Marie

www.vantagetravel.com
29. **For fragile objects** we take empty Pringle containers or round peanut cans with bubble wrap that we pack in bottom of our suitcase. It’s a great way to protect breakable items – we’ve brought back many delicate ornaments from our trips with Vantage.
— Susan Libby, Warren, MA, 3-time Vantage traveler

30. **Carry a small purse inside your day bag.** I use a nylon backpack or messenger-type shoulder bag during the day to carry personal belongings, camera, map, or guidebook, and maybe an extra sweater. Inside this bag I stash a small purse for my wallet, glasses, and maybe a comb and tube of lipstick. At night when I don’t want to lug that big bag around, I just remove the purse. And if I’m hitting a museum where security checks your bags upon entry, I can leave the day pack on the bus, and just breeze through with my clutch or mini shoulder bag.
— Diane Patriquin, Vantage Sr. Graphic Designer

31. **Ditch the family jewels.** As a rule, you should leave your precious jewelry at home. It’s not worth risking its loss, and it takes up room in your suitcase. If you must wear jewelry, pack just a few versatile costume jewelry pieces. Hopefully, you’ll pick up a few interesting baubles during your trip, and have new choices to jazz up your look.

32. **Wear skirts.** Skirts are more acceptable than pants in many cultures, and they should be conservative in length (no minis). Modesty aside, they’re practical and comfortable. (Think about those less-than-hygienic toilets where you don’t want to...
33. **Bring scarves and bandanas.** A pretty scarf is my essential travel fashion accessory. You can wear it around your neck or wrist instead of jewelry, dressing up even the simplest outfit. Use it as a sarong on the beach. Drape over your shoulders for a quick shawl. Wear it as a sash or belt. And tie back your hair instead of using rubber bands, or wear as a head scarf on bad hair days. On the road, it can be a handy napkin or placemat for less-than-pristine picnic tables. Ditto for seat covering or a pillowcase in a pinch. In desert areas, wear it across your face to block wind and dust, then wring it in cold water and drape around your neck to cool off. Best of all, it never wrinkles. Ever. I got mine at www.travelsmith.com but there are many places with a good selection of women’s travel wear, notably, www.chicos.com.

— Cheryl Sheehan, Vantage Group Sales Administrator

34. **Bring a sports bra.** Even if you don’t normally wear one, you will be glad to have the extra support when you are traveling for long distances on very bumpy roads (or places where there are no roads at all, as is the case with many safari destinations or mountainous locations.

35. **Easy cosmetic case.** Instead of a bulky, quilted cosmetics bag, buy a zippered pencil case with a clear front at a dollar store. Use it for makeup and nail files, sewing kit, and other small essentials. They’re slim, light, and the clear pouch makes it easy to find things.

36. **Warm up/cool down.** Heading for colder climes? Stock up on small, easy-to-pack hand, body, and foot instant-warming packets that slip easily into gloves, under clothes, or into shoes for extra warmth. Warmer destinations on your itinerary? Instant cold packs are a must-have for sightseeing in sunny locations that lack shade. I recommend bringing a light scarf to secure a cold pack on the back of your neck—made my visit to the Great Pyramid of Giza in August much more bearable!

37. **Fabulous floss.** I always carry a roll of dental floss. It has come in handy on many occasions from sewing buttons, wrapping a package, as a clothes line, tying items together, slicing cheese, eyeglass hanger, anything that requires string. Easy to carry and durable. Mint flavored optional!

— Gail Anderson, St. Louis Park, MN, Vantage traveler

38. **Balloons!** I use balloons for drying clothes. Blow them up and put between the layers of wet clothes (i.e., hang up a wet shirt on a hanger and put a balloon between the front and back). Adding air space between layers cuts drying time in half! Balloons take up no room in your luggage and extras can be given to local children.

— Sandra Behrens, Denton TX, Vantage traveler

39. **Carry toilet paper or tissues everywhere.** Toilet paper is often nonexistent in some places, or sold by attendants who hand out tiny squares for a fee. These “pay as you go” arrangements never seem sufficient to me, so I always take a partially used roll from home and remove the inner cardboard tube to flatten it easily.

— Kathleen Arsenault, Vantage Telesales Agent

40. **Handy earring caddy.** Buy a square of felt and cut it to about 4x4 inches. You can poke your earrings through the felt and then roll it up, securing with a rubber band or ribbon. It’s easy to visualize your choices this way, and the small roll stores easily.
6. Transportation

41. **Pay for your pal and earn more miles.** If you have Frequent Flyer miles to spend, use them towards the ticket of your friend, and pay for your own ticket. You will get one reward ticket and still be credited new miles for your own flight.

   — Carol English Ferullo, Vantage Vice-President, Worldwide Operations

42. **Print out boarding passes in colored paper** if you are printing your passes from your home computer. Makes it so much easier to visualize and locate them among all your other documents at the airport.

43. **Airport apps for your mobile device.** There are many great apps that let you do everything from monitor flight status, find the restaurant nearest your gate, navigate your way through the terminals, and even check in. Try GateGuru, Flightboard, iFly Airport Guide, or similar. Some major airports have their own free apps, such as Frankfurt (FRA), and Amsterdam’s Schiphol.

   — Lynne Noll, Vantage Sr. Programmer Analyst

44. **BYO snacks.** Take snacks on the plane when you fly. There may be occasions when the plane may be stuck on the tarmac for long periods of time, possibly running out of food and water. Better to be safe than sorry, hungry, and grumpy!

45. **Stay hydrated in flight.** Drink lots of water, of course, but also avoid high-salt foods, caffeine, and alcohol. Many international airports now have filling stations where you can replenish the water in your portable bottle. To keep your skin moist, use an atomizer. Evian Spray Brumisateur is usually available at local drug stores, but any small bottle with a spray pump can be filled with mineral water to keep your face moisturized. Just remember to keep the bottle empty till you get through the security gate. Also, bring eye drops, saline nasal spray, skin moisturizer, and a tiny pot of lip balm or petroleum jelly to dab inside your nostrils, and breathe easier in those dry cabins.

   — Christel Shea, Vantage Director of Customer Service

46. **Prevent earaches while flying.** A half hour to 45 minutes before your flight, take an antihistamine or decongestant. Then, just before boarding, use a nasal spray in each nostril, and “pop” your ears by holding your nose and mouth shut and attempting to blow air out your nostrils. This clears your Eustachian tubes, which can become swollen or blocked when cabin pressure changes, causing ear pain. It’s especially important to do this if you feel a cold coming on, because if fluids get trapped in your tubes, infection can develop. You should also chew gum, swallow frequently, and pop your ears whenever they start to feel blocked. (Check with your doctor beforehand if you have any conditions that may be affected by excess pressure.)

47. **Introduce yourself to the flight attendant.** Being a flight attendant isn’t the glamorous job it was once thought to be. Though most flight attendants work hard to serve all the passengers in a timely...

“The true traveler is he who goes on foot, and even then, he sits down a lot of the time.”

— Collette
manner, their efforts are not often recognized. So take a moment to smile, acknowledge your flight attendant’s presence, and make a personal introduction. Your gesture will stand out, and as a result, when you need the flight attendant for something, you’re less likely to get “lost in the crowd.”

— Carol Gould, Vantage Manager of Corporate Administration

48. **Use a pillow.** The small pillow provided by the airlines is good to place at the small of your back. Otherwise, avoid falling asleep with your head cocked to one side, as it can cause neck and backaches. Bring a pillow that conforms to your musculature, such as a U-shaped pillow to wrap around your neck. Consider also a tempurpedic-type, inflatable, or a Japanese-style buckwheat or microbead pillow, which can help you sleep better throughout your trip.

49. **Keep your metabolism going during flights.** Deep vein thrombosis, constipation, swollen ankles and feet, and general aches and pains can flare up when you sit for long periods of time. Get up and walk a few laps of the plane every once in a while. Elevate your feet on your purse or carry on. Exercise neck muscles by raising and lowering your head and turning it gently from side to side. Shrug your shoulders and roll them back and forth. Contract and release abdominal and buttock muscles to the count of four, slowly breathing as you go. Facial muscles can do with a little hand massage here and there, and rubbing your temples and opening your eyes wide can help relieve headaches.

— Roseann Duncan, Vantage Team Leader - Products

50. **Use public transportation!** If you want to feel the pulse of a city, skip the taxicab and take the public trains or buses that local folks use. It’s the green way to go, it’s cheaper than cabs, and likely more memorable. In Delhi, for example, the new metro system is clean and fast, and there’s a Ladies Car at the end of each train, so you’ll always feel safe. Tokyo boasts perhaps the best metro system in the world—the preferred means of transport for residents and visitors alike, with clean and fast service to anywhere in the city, and well beyond. The Paris Metro mixes modern cars with the nostalgic charm of its many Art Nouveau stations. (In 2012, all Paris Metro stations began offering free wi-fi service.) The Moscow metro is an attraction in and of itself. Built during the 1930s to embody *svet* (radiance) it was intended to glorify the Stalinist future, and as such, the stations are bright and extravagant galleries hung with art and brilliant fittings.

51. **Photographic memory.** Take a picture of the bus license plate with your camera so you’ll get on the right bus each time you return from a group tour.

— Linda Revenson, Staten Island, NY, Vantage traveler

52. **The Anti-Jet Lag Diet.** In 1982, a scientist at the U.S. Department of Energy’s Argonne National Laboratory developed a technique to overcome jet lag that has had proven success. A 2002 study concluded that travelers using this technique were seven times less likely to suffer jet lag when traveling west, and 16 times less likely when traveling east. The regimen begins four days before your departure, and attempts to adjust your circadian rhythms using a feast/fast diet with meals based on high proteins and high carbohydrates at specific times of day. It’s available at [www.netlib.org/misc/jet-lag-diet](http://www.netlib.org/misc/jet-lag-diet) and also at [www.antijetlagdiet.com](http://www.antijetlagdiet.com), an officially licensed site.

53. **Soothe your muscles.** Get a full back and neck massage just after arriving at your destination. It will help you sleep much better during your first night abroad, enabling you to get over jetlag faster.

*Editor’s note:* All ships in the Vantage fleet and virtually every hotel in our network will arrange a massage upon request. Ask your Program Manager or Discovery Leader to help you reserve one.
7. Health & Wellness

54. **Start an exercise regimen several weeks before your trip.** Even if your trip will not be particularly active, it can be taxing to stand or sit for long periods of time, to carry luggage, or simply acclimatize to new environments. Mild daily exercise can help you build stamina, improve circulation, and regulate sleep. You don’t need to become a gym rat, just add a little walking or stretching, and you’ll be good to go.

— Jacqueline Lewis, Vantage Response Marketing Manager

55. **Get plenty of sleep.** Getting a good night’s sleep is extra important while traveling. Sleep medications can help – be they prescription drugs, over the counter medications, or herbal supplements like valerian or melatonin. But it’s important to check with your doctor before taking any of these. Otherwise, here are some non-medical tricks: use a pillow that conforms to your musculature, especially during a flight. Consider a tempurpedic-type, inflatable, or a Japanese-style buckwheat or microbead pillow. Eye masks or ear plugs can reduce outside stimulation. And mind what you eat in the evening, avoiding caffeine, alcohol, and spicy or salty food that can dehydrate you. Foods known to relax your nervous system include calcium and magnesium. You can take it as a supplement, or just enjoy a warm glass of milk before bedtime. Tryptophan is a substance known to cause drowsiness, and it’s found in turkey, bananas, potatoes, and oats. Meditation, deep breathing, and yoga can be effective. Exercising three to five hours before bedtime (an early-evening walk will do it!) can help promote deep sleep.

56. **Bring your medical history.** It may take some time, so start gathering important information early, starting by contacting your doctor’s office. Your history should include:

- Name, address, home phone
- Social security number
- Insurance company and ID number
- Emergency contact information
- Medical history (including recent hospitalizations)
- Current medications and dosages (generic names)
- Insulin (if diabetic)
- Blood type
- List of drug allergies
- List of immunizations/vaccinations

57. **Carry your history on a thumb drive.** Once you’ve prepared your medical history (see tip #56 above), copy it onto a USB thumb drive. You can carry this with you or wear it on a necklace, bracelet, or key chain. When going through security screenings at the airport, ask the agent to please inspect the USB drive manually.

58. **Drink water – constantly!** It flushes your system of toxins, helps carry nutrients to cells, and delivers needed moisture to your skin, nose, and throat tissues – all extra-important when you are
travelling. The old rule of thumb – eight 8-ounce glasses a day – basically conforms to the adequate intake for women recommended by the Institute of Medicine: 2.2 liters. If bottled water is not readily available, try a portable water filter like the compact SteriPEN, LifeStraw, or the Pur Voyageur. Many outdoor recreation supply companies (like L.L. Bean or REI) sell collapsible water containers or purifying tablets (usually based on iodine).
— Eleonora Reitano, Vantage Air Operations Flights Agent

59. Be aware of recent epidemics and common infectious diseases in your destination. Your travel company should provide information about any vaccinations or important health concerns before you go. Otherwise, two comprehensive worldwide health information sources are the U.S. Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov/travel) and the United Nations’ World Health Organization or WHO (www.who.int/ith).
— Rachel Carr, Vantage Customer Service Representative

60. Bring extra medication and copies of all your prescriptions. Be sure to list the strength or dosage, and indicate the generic names of your medications, as brand names differ from country to country.

61. Carry a MedicAlert card. MedicAlert is a non-profit emergency identification and medical information network. For an annual fee (at press time, $45 for an adult) the organization will provide an internationally recognized MedicAlert card that cites any special conditions or allergies, your blood type, and other salient information. They will also provide jewelry (such as an identification bracelet or necklace), and 24/7 family notification services. Medic Alert maintains additional information in its database, which can be accessed with an emergency phone call from anywhere in the world. You can buy the cards and jewelry at most drugstores, or contact them directly at:

2323 Colorado Avenue
Turlock, CA 95381
www.medicalert.org
888-633-4298

www.vantagetravel.com

62. Vision care on the go. Bring enough contact lenses, a spare pair of glasses, and a copy of your eyeglass prescription (just in case....) If you wear contacts, be sure to bring contact lens solution and a spare case; or, if you’ll be traveling in a country where hygiene is a concern, switch to daily disposable lenses. Don’t forget sunglasses that provide 100% UV protection. And saline drops keep your eyes refreshed and healthy during long flights, in hot weather, and at the end of a dusty road.
— Lourdes Barajas, Vantage Air operations Flights Agent

63. Blister prevention. Of course you should wear sensible shoes, and not wait for your trip to break in a new pair. The idea is to reduce friction and keep your feet dry. A hiker friend swears by this trick: rub feet with petroleum jelly, put on one pair of wicking socks, apply talcum powder to the socks, then put on a second pair of socks! (She also buys walking shoes half a size too big for this purpose). You might also apply underarm deodorant on your feet to keep them dry and prevent chafing.

64. Blister care. OK, blisters happen. So treat them by cleaning, applying an antibacterial ointment, and covering with moleskin, zinc oxide tape, band-aids, or (if nothing else is handy), duct tape. Compeed is a product based on a hydrocolloid that acts as a second skin, protecting and cushioning the blister while preventing infections with antibacterial properties. It is hard find in the U.S. but available on www.amazon.com. Simple aloe vera can ease the pain and help keep the exposed skin moist.

65. Repel insects with dryer sheets. Bounce, in particular, is said to repel insects, so during a trip to the south of France, I kept a sheet tied through my beltloop or in a breast pocket. Voila! No flies on me, or mosquitoes, either!
— Regina Goslin, Vice President, Vantage Call Center
66. **Baking soda bonanza.** A small box of baking soda has a myriad of personal care uses:
- Dip your toothbrush in it for extra freshening and whitening
- Add to water as a quick mouthwash
- Use as a facial scrub and exfoliant
- Pat under your arms as a deodorant
- Make paste with water to treat bug bites
- Add to cool water for a soothing foot soak
- Tummy sore? Baking soda and water make a good antacid
- Add a little to your shampoo to remove build up and residue

67. **Lavender!** It’s more than just a pretty face:
- Add it to your sunscreen, and it will also repel mosquitos and flies
- Rub on aching knees and ankles for soothing your joints
- Lavender oil or essence sprinkled on bedsheets will kill mites, lice, bedbugs, and other nasties
- Add it to shampoo for shiny, soft hair
- Rub on your temples to soothe a headache
- Stuffy nose? Add a few drops of lavender to a steaming bowl of water and inhale

68. **Use panty liners.** They help you feel clean and comfortable, and a quick replacement makes it easy to freshen up after a long day of traveling. Panty liners can be a godsend if you find yourself in a bathroom with no toilet paper. And wearing panty liners helps you extend the life of your underwear, making it easy to launder them on the road.

69. **What to do when ya gotta go.** We’ve all been there— that place where there is no proper toilet, but a very full bladder. Enter the FUD, or female urination device. It’s not as odd as it sounds. Female military personnel (in NATO, among others) use them, as do many campers. FUDs are soft plastic or paper funnel-like devices that allow a woman to urinate standing up, while remaining dry. You can find them at many camping supply and outdoor recreation stores, and also online. Look for brand names like Urinelle, GoGirl, The Whiz, and Shewee. Otherwise, carry a few soft

“For attractive lips, speak words of kindness. For lovely eyes, seek out the good in people. For a slim figure, share your food with the hungry. For beautiful hair, let a child run his or her fingers through it once a day. For poise, walk with the knowledge you’ll never walk alone.”

— **AUDREY HEPBURN**
70. **Cover shampoo bottles with plastic.** The fluctuating temperatures and pressure in air cabins causes bottles to expand and contract, so place a small film of plastic wrap over the opening, then twist on the cap to help stop leaks.
— Deirdre Dirkman, Vantage Air Contracting & Costing Analyst

71. **Deflate puffy eyes.** Long flights can leave your eyes swollen and dull. Ask the flight attendant for some crushed ice and make a compress using a handkerchief or napkin. If you drink black, green, or chamomile tea during your flight, save the bags and when they are cool, place over the eyes to brighten or reduce puffiness. Cold milk also works. Reduce your salt intake during flight and snack on things that have diuretic properties like cranberry juice, raisins, and bananas.
— Charlene Henry, Vantage Telesales Agent

72. **Tame your tresses.** Flying away is great; flyaway hair, not so much. Use a natural bristle brush instead of a synthetic one to reduce the static cling that builds up in plane cabins. Otherwise, apply a leave-in conditioner before flying or long bus rides. Limp, oily hair and no time to shampoo? Toss about two tablespoons of baby or talcum powder into your palms and massage into your roots. Comb or brush it out (bending your head over and brushing forward helps), and you’ll be looking fluffy in no time.

73. **Multi-purpose your lip balm.** You can only take so much in your carry on, but one must-have is a small tube or pot of lip balm. Aside from caressing your kisser, it can be used as a facial moisturizer, eyebrow tamer, or soother for cuticles, cracked knees, or dry elbows. Dab a little lipstick on your cheeks, add balm, and you have an instant blusher. Mix with your powdered eye shadow for a shimmery nighttime look. Dull shoes? Polish with a bit of balm and tissue. Cut your legs shaving? Stop the bleeding with lip balm. Use balm to lubricate a stuck zipper.

74. **Jewelry care.** Necklaces can be laced through cut straws and then clasped to prevent tangling in your bag. Polish your jewelry with toothpaste.
— Kathleen O’Dea, Vantage Response Marketing Manager

75. **Your travel laundry list.** You can purchase small travel-sized bottles of detergent, or fill a small plastic bottle with detergent from home, but most shampoos (especially baby shampoo) will clean your clothes just fine. I also recommend you go to your local hardware store and buy an old-fashioned sink stopper – the flat, disk-like kind that will fit over any size drain. To dry your wet laundry, you can string heavy nylon fishing line (you only need a few yards), or even dental floss.
— Nancy L’Hereux, Vantage Sr. Accountant

76. **Leave the travel iron at home.** If you choose wrinkle-resistant fabrics you may never need an iron, and most hotels will lend you one, anyhow. Better yet, steam your clothes the night before simply by hanging then in the bathroom when you take a hot shower, or spray them with a wrinkle-release product such as Downy. If it’s the last minute and you don’t have this handy, you can make your own wrinkle releaser with 2 tablespoons of fabric softener, 12 ounces of water, and ½ ounce of rubbing alcohol or vodka. Add it to a spray bottle, and voila!
— Susan Mahoney, Vantage Sr. Programmer Analyst

77. **Shower power.** Save time by bringing small soiled items like socks and underwear with you into the shower. After washing, roll them up in a towel and hang dry.

78. **Johnny on-the-spot remover.** Most commercial detergent brands (like Shout) sell spot remover sticks that fit in your purse, but if you don’t have one, this household remedy may suffice: rub the stain with lemons, let dry a bit, and rinse. Baby wipes or flushable adult personal hygiene wipes also work well.
— Karen O’Brien, Vantage Traffic Administrator
9. Safety & Security

79. Carry a rubber doorstop. In case there is no deadbolt or chain lock on your hotel door, jam it with this simple, portable, and inexpensive stopper.
— Elena Mackenzie, Vantage Air Operations Flights Agent

80. Sign language. Never leave the “Please Clean” sign on your hotel door, as it implies that your room is empty (and ripe for burgling.) Just call the front desk before you vacate for the day, and let them know your room is ready for cleaning. By the same token, since most robbers would rather not encounter anyone at the scene of the crime, leaving the “Do Not Disturb” sign on your door might sway them to pass on your (presumably occupied) room.

81. The safest hotel rooms tend to be those within two doors of the elevator. Do not accept a ground floor room, or one that is at the far end of an L-shaped corridor. When a porter, service person, or room service attendant comes to your room, leave the door open and try to conduct your business as close to the door as possible.

82. Keep your room number private. If the desk clerk happens to say the number of your room out loud when you are checking in, and there are strangers around who may overhear it, request a different room. Similarly, if a wait-staff person asks for your room number (as when charging a meal to your room), show your room key (which usually has the number on it), or if you have a key card with no room number on it, just say the number quietly and discreetly. You never know who may be listening to see if you are alone.
— Donna King, Vantage Accounts Receivable Accountant

83. Don’t walk on the wild side. When walking on sidewalks keep your handbags and other valuables away from the curb side. It will deter purse snatchers, especially the ones who ride up alongside you on a motorbike or scooter and take off.
— Nibedita Parhi, Vantage Sr. Database Administrator

“Safety is not a gadget but a state of mind.”
— Eleanor Everet

Dee Dowers
Scottsdale, AZ
9-time Vantage Traveler

A retired stockbroker, Dee is a fan of river cruising because “there’s always something to see. You can just sit on the deck and watch the towns and villages go by.” Not that Dee does a lot of sitting around…. She says “it’s important to do your homework and get a good guidebook, so you know exactly what there is to see and do during your free time.” As a single, Dee appreciates that aboard a small ship “you get to know people quickly.” She’s comfortable traveling solo or with friends, and often does so with another single woman she met on a past Vantage trip. “We don’t share a room,” she says, but they’ve shared many a good time.
84. **Be skeptical of taxi drivers’ tips.** Most cab drivers are genuinely friendly and helpful, but some may try to steer you towards businesses where they get a kickback. As a single woman, you may seem like an easy mark. So if you are feeling pressured to go to a different hotel, restaurant, or shop than the one you’ve requested, just politely decline and say, “I’m meeting my husband/father/brother” at your original choice. Also, never tell a cabbie that you’re new in town – your fare may go up. Instead say, “It’s great to be back.”

   — Mary Rowe, Vantage Telesales Agent

85. **Get help breaking the ice.** Are you a card player? A history buff? A gardener? A golfer? When traveling solo on a group tour or cruise, be sure to let your tour director or trip leader know about any special interests or hobbies you might have. They’ll be happy to introduce you to any like-minded travelers who share your interests and may want to pursue them with you.

   — Dora Varga, Vantage Product Planning Administrator, Budapest

86. **Wear a wedding band** (or turn another ring around on your finger to make it look like a wedding band.) This advice certainly applies if you want to ward off unwanted sexual advances. But it also might save you a lot of breath if you just don’t want to have to explain your status over and over again. The truth is, people in many cultures (women as well as men) just cannot understand why a woman would travel without a husband. Their curiosity might not be satisfied with a simple answer, so a wedding band just might eliminate awkwardness.

   — Carol Pennini, Vantage Product Manager

87. **Avoid eye contact and walk briskly** if you feel uncomfortable and want to shut down would-be Lotharios. Engaging your harasser in any way—even if it is to politely decline an invitation—may well be interpreted as a “yes.” So ignore and keep on walking!

88. **Be a barfly.** When dining alone, sit at the bar. It’s the best seat in the house if you feel a little conspicuous sitting at a table by yourself. The bartender will do his or her best to make you feel at home, and others seated at the bar are likely to strike up conversations with you. Most couples would prefer to sit at a table, so the odds are that the bar will have more singles like you who are open to meeting new people.

89. **Make lunch your main meal.** If you are not used to dining on your own, it’s common to feel a little awkward or lonely at first. A good way to “get over the hump” is to take your main meal at lunchtime, when the busy midday rush may help you feel less conspicuous, and the daylight may help you feel cheerier.

90. **Get a whistle.** You can obviously use this for safety reasons, but it can also come in handy for hailing a cab, chasing away pesky squirrels or monkeys, or for helping you stop the bus.

“I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship.”

   — LOUISA MAY ALCOTT
91. **Grab printed hotel materials.** Hotel stationery, business cards, matchbooks, even napkins usually have the name and address of the hotel printed on them, so you can show them to your cab driver or anyone you’re seeking directions from. It’s an especially useful way to find your way back when traveling in a country with a different alphabet.

— Karen Keith, Vantage Telesales Agent

92. **Don’t wear perfume.** It’s just unnecessary and in some cultures, it will attract unwanted attentions and brand you as “loose.” Not to mention, it will save you some room in your suitcase!

— Ann-Marie Beckford, Vantage Telesales Agent

93. **Ask your travel company about single shares** if you want to avoid paying the single supplement (or just want some company). Many travel operators will try to match you with a roommate for this purpose. But be prepared to be flexible. It’s virtually impossible for a travel company to match you based on any criteria other than gender and smoking preferences. Beyond that, you need to be open-minded. Can you tolerate a snorer? A night owl? A chatty person? Do you always have to shower at night, or in the morning? If you can be a little flexible, work out some ground rules with your partner, and have the right mindset, you may end up not only with some extra savings, but a new friend for life.

94. **Paris Aboveground.** Here’s a secret about the Paris Metro: lines 2 and 6 run above ground for a good part of the route, offering impressive views of icons like the Eiffel Tower and Sacre Coeur. In a hurry? Travel aboard Paris’s RER trains (the public transit express commuter rails) is included with certain Metro passes, and they can cut your travel time. For example, a trip across town from South Paris (Denfert Rochereau) to the Gare du Nord would typically take 30 minutes on the Metro, just 20 on the RER. You can buy a multi-day Paris Visite card that offers unlimited travel within certain zones within a certain period of time. It also offers discounted admission to select attractions. But you may be better off purchasing the carnet, a ten-pack of tickets that can be cheaper and has no time limit (so you can use them when you make a return visit.)

— Linda Herlihy, Vantage Sr. Director, Air Operations

95. **Say it with flowers in Italy.** If invited to a local home, it’s fine to bring flowers as a hostess gift. Just never give chrysanthemums, as they are associated with death. Red flowers are usually only...
given between romantic partners, and they sometimes symbolize secrecy. Yellow flowers are associated with anger and jealousy. Stick to pink, white, or purple — or better yet, give wine or chocolates!
— Karen Azzotto, Vantage Robotics Analyst

96. **Amsterdam’s Open Garden Days.** Ever stroll through a foreign neighborhood, and daydream about what lies behind its closed doors? If you are in Amsterdam during the third weekend in June, you can find out during the annual *Open Tuinen Dagen* or Open Garden Days. In association with several museums, about 30 fine residential homes with beautiful canal gardens open their doors to guests. For about 15 euro you get a *passe partout*, which provides entry to all 30 houses for three days. For more information visit [www.opentuinenagen.nl](http://www.opentuinenagen.nl).

97. **Try Jordanian ka’ak.** If you want to sample some classic Jordanian comfort food, try ka’ak, a delicious baked bread that’s soft on the inside and crunchy on the outside, topped with sesame seeds. It’s usually served with a baked egg, cheese, and za’atar, a traditional spice mixture. Very filling, delicious, and inexpensive. It’s sold on the street just about everywhere, but Amman’s most popular ka’ak bakery is Salaheddine, in the Abdali section, on King Hussein Street. The line stretches out the building (especially on Fridays), so get there early!

98. **A unique Rhine-Danube collectible.** If you visit the seasonal *Kristkindlmärkte*, or Christmas markets, you’re bound to enjoy some *glühwein*, a hot mulled wine that’s a holiday tradition. The ecologically conscious Germans and Austrians serve the wine in decorative ceramic holiday mugs. You pay a deposit of about two euros per mug, so if you wander off with the mug you end up with a special souvenir.

99. **Take the #2 Tram in Budapest.** The local public tram #2 is a great ride if you want to get your bearings and see some of the town’s most important sites. It passes Gellert Hill, Castle Hill, Parliament, and Central Market. Get on it at the Margaret Island Bridge, and you will enjoy super Danube views — all for a very small fare.
— Agnes Kranicz, Vantage Outside Services Coordinator, Budapest

100. **What to wear in Germany.** Germans dress a little more formally, and even their casual wear tends to be subtly sophisticated. Simple, chic, well-tailored clothes are what the fashionable *deutsche damen* wear. A blazer, slacks, and nice blouse are perfect for going out, and colors tend to be dark (not bright). Mind your footwear: some of the finer restaurants will not admit patrons in sneakers. In fact, Germans have a thing about white sneakers: they NEVER wear them, and think only American tourists do….

101. **Cover up in Eastern Europe and Russia.** Surprisingly, even after years of communism when religion was disavowed, Russia and many countries of the former Soviet bloc have some rather conservative standards when it comes to showing respect in orthodox churches. So ladies, do wear a hat or veil, or cover your head with a scarf. In summer, you may be denied entry if your legs, shoulders, or arms are bare, so wear pants or a long skirt, and bring a sweater or light shawl to cover up.
— Alena Aniskovich, Vantage Interactive Producer

102. **Don’t wear blue in the bush!** If you are going on safari in eastern or southern Africa, do not wear blue, as it attracts tsetse flies. In fact, public health officials use bright electric blue traps to lure these biting beasts, which can carry the parasite trypanosome that causes sleeping sickness, which can be fatal if untreated. Not all tsetse flies carry trypanosome, but even so, their bite is ferocious and can cause swelling and pain for days. Shades of tan are best for safari wear, as it is light enough to reflect heat, and dark enough to hide dust. So now you know why khaki never looked so good!
103. **Choose the right cruise.** All cruises are not created equal. Aside from narrowing it down by destination and length of time, think about your goals for this vacation. Do you want to explore many new destinations and experience the culture? Consider a small ship cruise or a river cruise. They present a new port nearly every day, and the focus will be on discovery — perfect for landlubbers who don’t want to waste time packing and transferring to different hotels. Would you be happy just relaxing and being pampered? Many ocean cruise ships are virtual floating resorts where you will find an array of dining choices, spa services, entertainment, and more. Who will be your shipmates? If you prefer a more sophisticated, adults-only cruise, avoid the party ships that cater to a younger crowd, as exemplified by Carnival Cruise Lines. If you’re traveling with kids or grandkids, family-style cruise ships (most notably, Disney) are theme parks at sea. Otherwise, there are many themed cruises that cater to a wide variety of adult interests – wine, music, history, singles cruises, and more. A good place to start your research is www.cruisecritic.com.

— Maria Chaves, Vantage Vice President River Operations

104. **Choose the right ship.** Once you’ve decided the destination and type of cruise you want, compare the ships. Large ships offer an array of amenities, so compare them to see that your “must-haves” are accommodated. Consider how this factors into your overall value: are you paying extra for the ice-skating rink you’ll never use? Would you be better off choosing a ship whose facilities are less extravagant, but whose other inclusions (shore excursions, wine with dinner, personalized service) are more important? Check the crew-to-passenger ratio to determine if service is going to be an issue, or if you’ll be lost in the crowd. If you are traveling solo make sure there are public areas and activities that are conducive to meeting other passengers.

105. **Cabin sense.** Some large ships can have as many as 20 different cabin categories. How to choose? Let common sense prevail. If you are on a long voyage with several days at sea, the old adage that “it doesn’t matter because you won’t spend much time in your cabin anyway” doesn’t hold true. Do you need a room with a view? Find out whether your cabin has a porthole, window, balcony, or French balcony (sliding doors without an exterior balcony.) Most standard cabins are smaller than typical American hotel rooms, and bathrooms typically have showers but no tubs. You might be able to enjoy these amenities if you upgrade to a deluxe stateroom or suite.

— Sheryle Henry, Vantage Customer Service Representative

106. **Location, location, location.** Check the deck plans to see what is near your cabin. If you are directly under a dance floor, there may be noise. An ocean-view cabin on the promenade deck will have lots of foot traffic between you and sea. Avoid cabins near utility rooms or stairs or elevators. You might be more bothered by engine noise on the lower decks, and

“There’s no place where one can breathe as freely as on the deck of a ship.”

— Elsa Triolet
cabin views (or noise) due to tenders or lifeboats being housed there. If you are prone to sea sickness, the best cabin location for you is on a lower deck in the middle of the ship (midway between the bow and the stern), where the pitch, roll, and yaw (ship movements) are less noticeable.

Editor’s Note: Vantage has a new fleet of deluxe European river ships that offer all outside cabins, and due to our unique design, none of them are near engines or under a lounge. They are among the most spacious available (between 165 and 250 square feet), and 78% of them have French balconies. Visit www.vantagetravel.com/AboutVantage/OurFleet for details.

107. Read your itinerary carefully. Aside from verifying that cruise goes to the places you want to see, make sure you will have enough time in each port by checking the arrival and departure times. Consider how far the port is from the attractions. If you are arriving at rush hour and need to get across town, this can really limit the things you can do. Find out whether your ship is departing in the middle of the day or at night.

Editor’s note: Vantage’s small ships typically depart at night and travel when you sleep, allowing you to make the most of your days ashore.

108. Tender or berth? Many large or even mid-sized ships have to anchor offshore and tender passengers ashore in smaller craft. This can be a matter of ship size, water depth, and the fees municipalities charge for dock space. If you’re on a large ship with thousands of passengers, the queues to disembark can be quite long. So if you have six hours in port and you need to allow two hours to get back and forth to your ship, your per diem cost drops in value, doesn’t it? The beauty of small ship cruising is that your ship usually has access to places larger vessels just can’t reach.

109. Check the nationality mix. If you are traveling aboard a European-based cruise line, you may be sharing the ship with guests from many countries. The international mix can be fascinating, but on the practical side, there may be language barriers that make it harder to make friends, and it can be tiresome having to listen to announcements and guided tours in several different languages.

110. Call out your special event. Will you be celebrating a birthday, anniversary, wedding, retirement, or some other milestone during your cruise? Don’t be bashful — let your trip leader or cruise director know, so they can help make your special occasion even more special, perhaps with a bottle of wine, an invitation to dine with the captain, a special serenade, or flowers in your cabin.

— Crystal Wall, Vantage Customer Service Representative

111. Ask the maitre’d about the Singles Table. Many large cruise ships set aside tables in the dining room specifically for singles who want to meet other solo travelers. Similarly, read the daily newsletter or announcements, as most large ships have special activities for singles.

112. Use the ship’s laundry service. It may cost you a little, but it means you can pack light (and avoid paying extra for airline luggage fees.

113. Know your nautical terms:
   – Fore: towards the front of the vessel
   – Aft: towards the rear of the vessel
   – Bow: the most forward part of the ship
   – Stern: the rearmost part of the ship
   – Midships: the middle of the vessel
   – Port: the left side of the ship when facing forward
   – Starboard: the right side of the ship when facing forward
   – Bridge: the ship’s navigation center
   – Galley: kitchen
Information or reservations call 1-800-322-6677

“Sharing food with another human being is an intimate act that should not be indulged in lightly.”

– M.F.K. Fisher

114. **Ask for the real deal.** If you like to try regional cuisines, make sure you always ask for the menu in the local language as well as the English-language version. You may find many dishes on the local version that the restaurateur has omitted from the tourist menus, believing they are too particular for a foreign palate. Not to mention, in some places, unfortunately, prices on local menus can be cheaper than the English ones.

115. **French dining don’ts.** The French have a saying, *jamais de sucré avant le salé* (“never the sweet before the salty”) that sums up their dining protocol. A typical French meal will have three to five courses: the entrée (a small savory starter); the plat, or main course; salade (a vegetable salad meant to cleanse the palate and provide roughage), fromage (the cheese course, never served before a meal as it fills you up), and finally, the dessert. The progression is always salty foods leading up to the sweet, as sugar tends to
overwhelm the palate. Coffee or tea are not usually served with dessert, but afterwards, though you can certainly request it in a restaurant. Why so many rules? The French are serious about dining and believe it should be done slowly, purposefully, and with company. They rarely snack, so the meals are meant to be savoried and appreciated.

**116. Ladies who lunch in Lyon.** The famous Lyonnais chef Paul Bocuse (the father of nouvelle cuisine) has several Michelin-starred restaurants in this gastronomic capital of France. But if you want a taste of traditional Lyon, have lunch at one of the inimitable bouchons. At the turn of the century, these traditional family-run bistros were often helmed by women who had lost their jobs as cooks for rich families. The so-called “mères” (mothers) put Lyonnais cooking on the map. If you want a more dazzling selection, shop at the more than 30 food markets around town, most of them lining the Saone and Rhone riverbanks—perfect for a French lunch outing you’ll never forget.

**117. Belgian fries rule!** Sure, we may call them “french fries,” but Belgium claims to be the originator of the crispy fried spuds we love so much. You will not argue the point once you taste the delicious frites that are sold all over Belgium at *frietkot*, which are fry shops or street carts. The frites usually come in paper cones with a variety of sauces. Taste the crunchy, salty, savory goodness, and you’ll be in carbohydrate heaven.

**118. Chinese chair covers.** In Chinese restaurants, after you’re seated at your table, a waiter or waitress may place a brown sack or cloth over the back of your seat, covering your coat and handbag. It’s meant to protect your belongings from spills, as the tables are usually very close together and the waitstaff can get jostled as they carry trays. Since Chinese restaurants do not prohibit smoking, it also protects your items from cigarette odors. And of course, a purse or coat that’s covered up is much more difficult to steal.

**119. Use your right hand to eat in India, Southeast Asia, and most Muslim countries.** Utensils are not always used in these regions, and sometimes food is served from communal dishes. One should never reach for or handle food with the left hand. The left hand is reserved for personal hygiene and handling things that have touched the ground (such as your shoes), and so it’s considered unclean.

**120. Bring portable cutlery.** A wonderful hunk of cheese beckons to you at a provençal market … you bring a lovely bottle of wine to your picnic in the Black Forest … you find a tantalizing noodle stall in a Chinese market, but can’t quite manage the chopsticks. All the above are reasons to pack a corkscrew and a few plastic forks, spoons, and knives in your travel bag. Many Swiss Army knives have all those necessities in one handy tool. (Just be sure to pack it in your checked luggage, not your carry on.)

– Maria Carella, Vantage Optional Tours Analyst
14. Social Graces

121. Mix up your seating routine. If you always sit at the same dining table or in the same seat behind the bus driver, it will take you much longer to get acquainted with the others in your group, at the hotel, or aboard ship. So rotate your seat and add a little variety to each day.

122. Be respectful in places of worship. If you will be visiting a temple, church, synagogue, or other place of spiritual significance, be sure to dress and behave modestly. Do not hold hands with your husband or partner, and keep your voice low. Shorts and tank tops are frowned upon in most places, so wear a skirt (at least knee-length) and cover your head or bare shoulders with a sweater or shawl. In temples and mosques you may be required to remove your shoes. Use your left hand to do so.

123. Bring family photos and postcards from home. Bring snapshots of your children or grandchildren, and you’ll have an instant way to connect with women from just about anywhere. You can also bring postcards of your home town or state, and hand them out as little gifts. If you visit a school, teachers might like these to help with their geography lessons.

— Brenda Maloney, Vantage Executive Assistant

124. Thoughtful gifts for children. Before you hand out money or candy, consider the impact your gift may have in areas where begging is rampant, and dental care nonexistent. Some better alternatives might be pens, crayons, small picture books, or school supplies. Stickers are easy to carry, and you can engage kids by blowing up some balloons, or blowing bubbles from a plastic jar. Toothbrushes, toothpaste, and small combs may also be appreciated.

125. Giving back to grownups. Flowers and candy are fine, but there may be everyday items that are more valued. In Cuba, for instance, it is hard to come by certain over-the-counter medications, so your aspirin and acetaminophen may be good to pass on, as are the small toiletry items you get at your hotel. Inexpensive t-shirts, socks, bandanas, and baseball caps are popular. Hair ornaments, books, snacks, and even gently used clothing can be left behind for the housekeeping staff. In poor areas, you could help a hotel maid rest a little easier by leaving her some staples like bottled water, rice, or baby supplies.

126. Mind your body language in Asia. Innocent gestures may unintentionally cause offense. In Asia, it’s impolite to point your feet towards anyone, ever. Do not pat anyone on the head, including children. It’s considered insulting and worse, an attempt to rob the soul. For the same reason, always ask if you can take someone’s picture.

— Sobia Syeda, Vantage International Operations Manager

127. To shake or not to shake. Many cultures have strict taboos against men and women touching each other, making it hard to know how to greet someone cordially. Generally, men in

“Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all peoples cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends.”

— Maya Angelou
Muslim countries are uncomfortable shaking hands with women. If you extend yours you may be met with a blank stare or an awkwardly limp hand. Women do not typically shake hands with men in Russia, either. In China, a handshake is an acceptable greeting, whereas a hug is not. In India and Nepal, the customary way to greet is to press your palms together in a prayer-like pose, slightly bow the head, and say, “Namaste,“ (I honor the life force that is within you.)

128. **The art of the French air kiss.** In France (and much of Europe) the customary way for women to greet both men and women is to *faire la bise* or “air kiss.” It tends to flummox Americans, and if you go for the wrong cheek at the wrong moment—yikes!—an awkward crash can ensue. The basic move is to gently lean your head towards the other person’s right, and gently brush their cheek with yours as you “kiss” the air near their ear. Women often make small kissing sound like a tiny “mwuah.” Then, lean back and repeat on the left side. Here’s the tricky part: it really does vary by region how many kisses to give! In Paris, it’s usually two (but can be four in some districts); in some départements, it’s three.

129. **Learn a few phrases in the local language.**
As an American, I find it humbling to travel abroad and discover that even the shoeshine boy speaks several languages! But I find that even if you can barely master the basic “hello,” or “thank you,” it’s the effort (more than the fluency) that counts. You may not understand the response, but there is no mistaking the smiles you get in return.

130. **Set your Facebook language to the language of a country you’re going to visit**, or would like to visit. For example, right now, “27,600 personer synes godt om dette”: 27,600 people like Vantage’s page. Or at least that’s how many people it was “2 minutter siden”: 2 minutes ago! Share with all your ‘venner’: FRIENDS! Next week, I may switch from Dansk to Svensk!

— Jane Nearing, Richardson, TX, Vantage traveler

“Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.”

—*Rita Mae Brown*
131. **Say it with pictures.** Kwikpoint visual language translators help you communicate with anyone — regardless of language barriers — simply by pointing to pictures on a card. The cards are waterproof and tear-proof, and come in a variety of sizes (passport size, wallet size, fold-out brochure, etc.). With more than 600 clear, color graphics and images, they help you get the point across. Available at [www.kwikpoint.com](http://www.kwikpoint.com).

132. **Bring a notebook computer or iPad.** This will allow you to upload your pictures and post them on the Internet right away, saving space on your camera’s memory card. There are various sites available for this (i.e. Picasa, Canon, Snapfish). Your friends and family can see your pictures while you are traveling, and your pictures are safe and sound in case something happens to your camera or memory card. The computer also allows you to keep in touch via email or Skype.

— Elizabeth Thompson, Arlington Heights, IL, Vantage traveler

133. **Keep the cards and letters coming!** I bring my Christmas card list and a stack of holiday cards with me so I can do something productive as I travel. It helps while away the time during long flights, and if it’s close to the holidays, my family and friends love receiving cards mailed from overseas. I also save time by bringing pre-printed address labels with me. I even save the free return address label sheets you get in the mail from charity solicitations, and use them to label personal travel belongings, and hand them out at the end of the trip to the new travel friends I want to stay in touch with.

— Faith Wilson-Russo, Vantage Call Center Trainer

134. **Be smart about your smartphone.** They are coveted items in most countries, and flashing the latest and greatest could make you a target for theft. On the other hand, there are dozens of great apps that can be helpful while exploring — navigation tools, ATM finders, city apps, dining apps (I love Foodict — a massive dictionary of local food expressions), numerous guidebooks, and currency converters (GoogleTranslate, Currency, or Unit Conversion Free). PicTranslator reads signs and translates them into English, and there are numerous traditional translation apps (Babelingo, iTranslate). There’s even an app to help you locate the nearest public toilet (Sit or Squat!). And if you are worried about connectivity, the JWire lets you find wi-fi hotspots in more than 140 countries.

135. **Stay in touch with Skype.** Using a voice over IP protocol like Skype can save you the high cost of international phone calls. The service is easy to download ([www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)) and it offers several free or low cost plans that include audio or video calls, instant messages, and even free calls to cell phones. And yes, there is a Skype app for your smartphone, so you don’t even need to bring your laptop or notebook.
136. **Shoot in the early morning and late afternoon.** Avoid high noon when the sun is directly overhead and things will look overexposed. The hours around dawn and dusk are when the light is low and slanted, creating a soft glow that brings out all the shadows and details. Similarly, don’t worry if it’s a little overcast outside. The moisture in the air filters the light, making it ideal for shooting.

137. **Use the Rule of Thirds.** This is the guideline professionals use to compose their shots, based on the idea that not everything should be centered. Look through your viewfinder and imagine that the space is divided by a tic-tac-toe board. Important elements can be aligned along the areas where the lines intersect, creating more visual interest and energy.

— Sarah Miley, Vantage Photo Editor & Manager Digital Assets

138. **Use your sunglasses** – not on your eyes, on your camera lens! If there is high glare and you do not have a filter, it’s the next best thing. Just hold the glasses as close to the lens as possible, check the image in your viewfinder, and snap!

— Rebecca Rudi, Vantage Creative Services Traffic Manager

139. **In-a-pinch photo gear.** If you find yourself without your waterproof backpack or camera case, try using the shower cap in your bathroom. The elastic keeps it fitting snugly, and you can poke a hole around the lens. Ditto for a Ziploc bag. Ziploc bags can also double as tripods – just fill with sand and you can balance your camera on a rock or table (but be sure the bag is snugly closed . . .) Otherwise, your balled-up windbreaker or sweatshirt can help with stabilization. To store memory cards, use the case from your dental floss or the plastic canisters that hold your prescription pills.

140. **Diffuse the flash.** How often have your subjects had the “deer in the headlights” look? Flashes are best when there is little or no light, or when there’s a discrepancy between the foreground and background. But for most shooting, flash use should be limited. When shooting from a distance, the flash will never reach the subject, so turn it off. Small point-and-shoot cameras (and cellphone cameras) are notorious for over-exposed images because the flash is (necessarily) close to the lens, flattening out the available light. You can minimize this by placing a semi-opaque white object over the flash, such as a tissue or piece of frosted tape or plastic. Just be sure not to touch your lens with it. You can also bounce light in another direction by taping and angling a small white card under the lens.

141. **Bring backups.** By now most travelers know that batteries and memory cards are more expensive abroad, and your rechargeable battery won’t do you any good if it runs out when you’re far from an electrical outlet. So bring backups of everything, including a disposable camera, just in case.

“For me, the subject of the picture is always more important than the picture.”

— DIANE ARBUS
17. Shopping

“When traveling abroad, if you see something you yearn for, if you can afford it at all, buy it. If you don’t, you’ll regret it all your life.”
– Ilka Chase

142. Bring samples and specs from home.
I always carry a Ziploc bag that has a list of everyone’s sizes, measurements of any area where I may want to display art or collectibles, and swatches of fabric and paint chips. It makes it easy to make sure the things I am thinking of buying are going to fit and match the décor, and it takes up very little room in my purse.

Editor’s note: Good advice—and there’s a handy size chart (with conversions for different countries) to help get started on page 70.

143. Hit the parapharmacies in France.
Parapharmacies have sprung up all over France in the last five years, and women shoppers are thrilled they did. These shops cannot dispense medicines (either prescription or over-the-counter), but they do sell fabulous cosmetics, hair and skincare products, personal care items, and très français gifts (think scented herbal soaps and colognes) — at discount prices. The selection is huge and you’ll get great deals on famous luxury brands (Klorane, Biotherm, Lancome, etc.) sold in U.S. department stores, plus terrific French brands that are hard to come by here.

144. Belgian bonanza.
The Belgian discount department store HEMA offers everything from clothing to housewares to toys, all at deeply discounted prices. You can actually find cosmetics and beauty products for one euro; and fantastic

Belgian chocolates, cookies, and gourmet goodies for less than two euro! When you’re done shopping, there’s a tasty cafeteria on site. The flagship store is at 13 Rue Neuve in Brussels, and there are outlets throughout Belgium and in the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

145. Big girls love to shop the Netherlands!
The Dutch are among the world’s tallest people, with men averaging more than six feet, and women just over 5’7”. So if you are a tall woman, this is the place to buy slacks and skirts. Similarly, women’s shoes are cut a little roomier here, and if you wear a large size you will love the Big Shoe store at Leliegracht 12 in Amsterdam, which specializes in shoes size 10 or above. We’re not talking clodhoppers here, but fashionable footwear. The owner, Marjan Kouw, also designs her own line, and has an Italian shoemaker craft them. Visit www.bigshoe.nl.

146. Holiday memories of your holiday....
Several travelers wrote to say that they always pick up a local Christmas ornament in every place they visit. It is so great to be reminded every Christmas of their trips. Also, the ornaments make ideal gifts for friends and family, and do not take up very much room when traveling.

Editor’s Note: Vantage offers several European River cruises that visit fabled Christmas markets along the Rhine and Main—a great way to travel, and trim your tree!
147. **...and the wrapping, too.** Anticipating that you might buy some delicate souvenirs on your trip, it's a good idea to bring along some bubble wrap, and perhaps a plastic shoe box to hold them.

148. **Jade or junk?** The jewelry shops and markets of Thailand, China, and Burma are aglow with luminous, natural jade. But some are also awash in fakes. Here's how to tell: hold the stone up to the light. If you see delicate veining that is a good sign — not so much if you see bubbles. Jade should be cool to the touch. If you hold it in your hand and it is warm right away, beware. If you clink two bangles of jade together, they will make a lovely chiming sound, but plastic will not.

*Editor’s Note:* Your Vantage Program Manager can direct you towards preferred shops that we have screened for quality and service. Many of these offers exclusive Vantage discounts, and also provide easy shipping options. Best of all, we guarantee all purchases.

149. **Real Russian amber?** Most of the world's amber comes from Russia's Kaliningrad region on the Baltic Sea. But fake amber — in the form of copal, glass, bakelite, or plastic — is everywhere. Real amber is warm, and if you rub it vigorously, it may give off a slight pine resin scent. There are other tests you can perform, but they involve chemical processes your merchant will not likely consent to! The best way to be sure you are getting real amber is to never buy it on the streets, only at reputable stores that provide a certificate of authenticity.

150. **Hong Kong’s Outlet Mall.** It seems redundant for a city that is already a bargain basement to have an outlet mall. But Hong Kong has its gleaming Citygate, where you will find authentic (not knockoff) wares from A/X Armani, Burberry, Cerruti, Victorinox, Coach, Bally, Escada, and about 80 other brands at discounts of 30-70%. It's on Lantau Island, at the Tung Chung station, 30 minutes from the downtown Central MTR station.

151. **Bargaining basics.** Outside Europe and North America, customers are expected to bargain for goods in the local markets. Never accept the first price suggested. Start by offering less than half. You can be certain the haggling will go up from there, but stay firm. Ask for discounts if you buy more than one item. Offer to pay in dollars (as many vendors will want the hard currency). In parts of Asia, you should ask the vendor if he has anything else (other than what's displayed). Many merchants save the best stuff in back rooms for “those in the know.” Be prepared to walk away if your price is not met, and more often than not, the vendor will come running after you with a better offer.

Norma Barton, Bedford, MA
12-time Vantage Traveler

As a former TWA airline hostess, Norma knows how to make travelers feel comfortable. But now, the vivacious world traveler prefers to let someone else handle the logistics and care for her. She enjoys traveling with her husband to more exotic locales, which feel accessible because “Vantage has everything arranged. You have plenty of choices, and such convenience.” Norma recalls the day when flying felt special, when passengers minded their manners, and airlines strived to provide a personal touch. Her tip? “Do unto others. Be polite when traveling, even when you’re tired and things go awry. It’s hard to have a great trip if you arrive grumpy.”
### Useful Foreign Phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>English</strong></th>
<th><strong>French</strong></th>
<th><strong>Spanish</strong></th>
<th><strong>German</strong></th>
<th><strong>Russian</strong></th>
<th><strong>Chinese</strong></th>
<th><strong>Croatian</strong></th>
<th><strong>Afrikaans</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hello/Good day</strong></td>
<td>Bonjour</td>
<td>Hola/Buenas dias</td>
<td>Gruss gott/Guten tag</td>
<td>Privet/zdravstvujte</td>
<td>Ni hao</td>
<td>Čao/Dobran</td>
<td>Haai/Goeie dag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goodbye</strong></td>
<td>Au revoir/adieu</td>
<td>Hasta la vista/adios</td>
<td>Auf wiedersehen</td>
<td>Dos vidaniya</td>
<td>Zàijiàn</td>
<td>Zbogom/dovidenja</td>
<td>Totsiens/mooi loop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Please</strong></td>
<td>S’il vous plait</td>
<td>Por favor</td>
<td>Bitte</td>
<td>Požalujsta</td>
<td>Xie xie</td>
<td>Molim</td>
<td>Asseblief</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thank you</strong></td>
<td>Merci</td>
<td>Gracias</td>
<td>Danke</td>
<td>Spasiba</td>
<td>Xie xie</td>
<td>Hvala</td>
<td>Baie dankie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>You’re welcome</strong></td>
<td>De rien</td>
<td>De nada</td>
<td>Bitte schön</td>
<td>Ne za čto</td>
<td>Bu ke qi</td>
<td>Nema na cemu</td>
<td>Dis’n plesir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I don’t understand</strong></td>
<td>Je ne comprends pas</td>
<td>Yo no comprendo</td>
<td>Ich verstehe nicht</td>
<td>Ya ne ponimaju</td>
<td>Wo bùdong</td>
<td>Ne razumijen</td>
<td>Ek verstaan nie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speak more slowly please</strong></td>
<td>Parlez plus lentement s’il vous plait</td>
<td>Habla más despacio, por favor</td>
<td>Können sie bitte langsamer sprechen</td>
<td>Pomed lennee požalujsta</td>
<td>Máfán ni jiàng mán yídian</td>
<td>Možete li pričati sporije</td>
<td>Praat stadiger aseebief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes/No</strong></td>
<td>Oui/Non</td>
<td>Si/No</td>
<td>Ja/Nein</td>
<td>Da/Nyet</td>
<td>Shi/Bu</td>
<td>Da/Ne</td>
<td>Ja/Nee</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Where is the toilet?</strong></td>
<td>Ou sont les toilettes?</td>
<td>¿donde estan los aseos?</td>
<td>Wo ist die toilette?</td>
<td>Gde tualet?</td>
<td>Cèsuó zài náli?</td>
<td>Gdje je zahod?</td>
<td>Wär is die toilet?</td>
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<td><strong>Ladies/Gents</strong></td>
<td>Femmes/Hommes</td>
<td>Mujeres/Hombres</td>
<td>Damen/Herren</td>
<td>Zhenskiy/Muzhskoy</td>
<td>Nu/Nan</td>
<td>Dame/Gospoda</td>
<td>Dames/Gent</td>
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<td>Entrée/Sortie</td>
<td>Entrada/Salida</td>
<td>Eingang/Ausgang</td>
<td>Vkhod/Vikhod</td>
<td>Rúkou/Chukou</td>
<td>Ulaz/Izlas</td>
<td>Ingang/Uitgang</td>
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<td><strong>Open/Closed</strong></td>
<td>Ouvert/Fermé</td>
<td>Abierto/Cerrado</td>
<td>Geöffnet/Geschlossen</td>
<td>Otkryto/Zakryto</td>
<td>Kai/Guan</td>
<td>Otvoreno/Zatvoreno</td>
<td>Oop/Toe</td>
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<td><strong>Check, please</strong></td>
<td>L’addition, s’il vous plait</td>
<td>La cuenta, por favor</td>
<td>Die rechnung, bitte</td>
<td>Shyoht, požalujsta</td>
<td>Qing jiézhànɡ</td>
<td>Račun, molim</td>
<td>Die rekening, asseblief</td>
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# International Monetary Units

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<thead>
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<th>Country</th>
<th>Unit</th>
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<td>Botswana Pula</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Brazilian Real</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Croatian Kuna</td>
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<td>British Pound Sterling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Vietnamese Dong</td>
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All-inclusive: A tour that includes all the essential elements for one price, i.e., transportation, accommodations, all meals, beverages, fulltime tour director or cruise/social director, sightseeing, transfers, most gratuities – almost the entire cost of your trip except personal items. How a travel company or resort defines “all-inclusive” varies, so find out exactly what is and is not covered.

Base fare: The fare, as of an airline ticket, before tax has been added. Commissions are calculated on the base fare.

City codes: Standardized three-letter codes used to identify cities and/or their airports.

Continental breakfast: This used to mean a simple breakfast of coffee or tea and a roll or bread and jam. Today, it may also include juice, fruit, or cereal, but not hot entrées. Find out from your hotel or travel company what is offered.

Full breakfast: A hearty breakfast (also called American, English, Irish, or Dutch) that usually includes coffee, tea, juice, eggs, meat, and cheese, according to local custom.

Direct flight: A flight that requires no change of planes but may involve a stopover in another city to pick up passengers.

Gateway city: The city from which your international flight or cruise departs.

Nonstop flight: A flight that travels directly to your final destination with no stops in between.

Escorted Tour: A tour led by a trip leader, tour director, or escort who accompanies the travelers during their exploration, and stays with them in the same hotel.

F.I.T.: Foreign independent travel. This may be a trip arranged for you by a travel agent, generally the most expensive way to travel.

Hosted tour: A tour that provides a different local guide or host in each destination for a limited time each day. Typically these do not include activities or sightseeing, but the host is available to help with planning.

Meal plans: A European Plan (EP) or Bed & Breakfast Plan (B&B) usually includes a continental breakfast. An American Plan (AP) includes three full meals a day; a Modified American Pan (MAP) includes two meals a day. You usually have breakfast and your choice of lunch or dinner. Table d’hote is a fixed price menu with limited choices. A la carte is a French phrase that literally means “according to the menu,” and indicates that you order and pay for the items of your choice separately, based on menu prices. Outside the U.S., coffee or tea is rarely included with any meals except breakfast.

Open jaw: A trip that has no air travel between two points on the itinerary. For example, an air routing that has you flying into one city but returning home from another one (as opposed to a round trip).

Pax: Abbreviation for “passenger.”

Per diem: From the Latin for “for the day,” the cost of a vacation package or cruise per day.

Rack rate: The price a hotel may charge for a room before any discount has been applied. It may be an artificially inflated published price used as a basis for calculating discounts or promoting offers.
How to Shop for a Travel Company

Sure, you want to see the world, but maybe you don’t want to take on the world when it comes to managing all the logistics. Choose a good travel operator, and not only will you save yourself the hassle of coordinating flights, transfers, etc., you may enjoy better quality for less than you’d pay on your own. Here are a few ways to make sure your needs will be met:

1. Get independent recommendations. Have friends traveled with this company before? Are there traveler reviews posted on the website? Will the company share quality ratings? Is it accredited with the Better Business Bureau? Make sure the word on the street is good.

2. What’s included in the price? A low lead price is only great if it includes the essentials. We’re not just talking air and hotels. Consider the number of covered meals and drinks. Are there additional entrance fees? Tips? Port charges or air fuel surcharges? Once you’ve factored in these items, divide the total cost by the number of days, and you’ll have a per diem cost that makes comparing different operators easier.

3. Where are the hotels located? A central location is not just a matter of convenience, but cost. If you only have one day in a certain city and need to spend half that day traveling across town to a must-see attraction, you’re not making the most of your time—and time is money!

4. What is the pacing like? Make sure you get a detailed itinerary so you can see how many stops are packed into each day. Also, check the day of the week you will be in important locations. Certain museums and attractions are closed on Mondays, for example, and if you are departing in the middle of the day, your exploring time may be rushed.

5. Who is leading the group? Whether you call them a Program Manager, Trip Leader, or Tour Escort, the fact is, your trip leader can make or break your trip. Make sure yours is experienced, and find out whether he or she will be with you for the entire length of the trip. Vantage Program Managers offer the advantage of being residents of the regions they serve, which means that you get the insider’s perspective from someone who really knows the ins and outs.

6. How large is the group, and who is in it? Are there 20 people in your group, or 70? Traveling in a larger group may be more affordable, but a small group will obviously feel more personal and congenial, and provide better access to the culture. Find out who has reserved so far. Are there mostly women on this departure? Couples? Singles? What is the general age group? Knowing this may help you choose a group whose dynamic is most comfortable for you.

7. Does the company offer travel insurance? Travel insurance plans (also called travel protection plans) can save the day if you need to cancel or postpone your trip, or if you suddenly fall ill and need to come home. Plans vary widely so be sure yours covers all the bases. Are there exclusions for pre-existing conditions? At what point prior to departure can you cancel before penalties or fees kick in? Is there any coverage for travel accidents, or lost luggage? Does the plan cover the cost of a one-way ticket home? Make sure you know before you go.

Editor’s Note: Vantage Deluxe World travel offers a 100% Travel Protection Plan that is one of the most comprehensive available. You can cancel at any time up to the day of departure and retain the full value of your travel investment. It covers trip interruption, emergency medical expenses, emergency medical evacuation, and more. Of special benefit is the waiver of the pre-existing medical condition exclusion if you purchase your plan within 14 days of reserving. For more information, visit www.vantagetravel.com/VantageValue/WaysToSave/TravelProtection.
### Clothing Size Conversions

The following conversions are approximate only, as sizing varies widely based on the manufacturer. Though many countries use metric sizes (in Europe, for example), those sizes are influenced by the stature of the average person in that country, so sizes in Italy and Greece, for example, run smaller than in Germany or the Netherlands. Whenever possible, try on your garments before purchasing.

#### Women’s Dresses, Coats, Jackets, Suits

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<thead>
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#### Women’s Sweaters, Blouses, Pants

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#### Men’s Jackets, Suits, Coats

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#### Men’s Shirts

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</table>

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Children’s Sizes
Kid’s sizes in most of the world are not based on age (as here in the U.S.) but height and (somewhat), weight. The best approach would be to take measurements of the child you wish to buy for, and convert them to metric accordingly. (See the index on page 73 for metric conversions.) When in doubt – buy bigger! Your child will likely grow into the clothes soon enough.

Europe/UK/Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50 cm</td>
<td>18-22 in.</td>
<td>6-12 lbs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 cm</td>
<td>22-26 in.</td>
<td>10-16 lbs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>70 cm</td>
<td>26-30 in.</td>
<td>14-21 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 cm</td>
<td>30-34 in.</td>
<td>20-27 lbs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>90 cm</td>
<td>34-38 in.</td>
<td>26-33 lbs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>100 cm</td>
<td>38-42 in.</td>
<td>31-38 lbs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>110 cm</td>
<td>42-46 in.</td>
<td>37-48 lbs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>120 cm</td>
<td>46-50 in.</td>
<td>45-55 lbs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>130 cm</td>
<td>50-54 in.</td>
<td>52-64 lbs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>140 cm</td>
<td>54-58 in.</td>
<td>62-80 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150 cm</td>
<td>58-62 in.</td>
<td>75-95 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160 cm</td>
<td>62-66 in.</td>
<td>88-110 lbs.</td>
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</table>

My sizes
Use these lines to write the names and sizes of anyone you may be shopping for.

Measurement Conversion Chart

Converting Celsius to Fahrenheit
If the Celsius Temperature is above 0°: Double the Celsius temperature and add 30 degrees to get the Fahrenheit equivalent.

For example: 20°C = 20 x 2 = 40 + 30 = 70°F

If the Celsius Temperature is below 0°: Ignore the minus sign, double the Celsius temperature, and subtract from 32 to get the Fahrenheit equivalent.

For example: -7°C = 7 x 2 = 14, 32 - 14 = 18°F

Weights & Measures

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<tr>
<th>To Convert</th>
<th>Into</th>
<th>Multiply by</th>
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<td>Centimeters</td>
<td>Inches</td>
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<td>Centimeters</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gallons (U.S.)</td>
<td>Liters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liters</td>
<td>Gallons (U.S.)</td>
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<td>Ounces</td>
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<td>Kilometers</td>
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<td>Miles</td>
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Tips on Tipping

Tipping should always be at your own discretion, based on your personal appreciation for services rendered. If you are traveling in a group, your travel company should provide specific tipping advice for Program Managers, guides, cruise personnel, drivers, etc. Otherwise, here are some common scenarios:

**Europe** The one universal here is to tip in cash. Beyond that, standards vary widely, though in general a restaurant tip (included or not) will run about 10%-15% of the bill. In **France**, the bill will usually say “service compris” (tip included), but you should leave a little extra – up to 10% more. Ditto for **Italy, Portugal**, and **Spain**. In **Germany**, the tip is not usually included, and you should leave about 15%. The usual 10% is appreciated at **Croatian** restaurants, but at konoba (taverns) you would be safe leaving less. In the **Czech Republic** and **Slovakia**, the tip is usually included, but you can add to it to make a total of about 15% if the service warrants it. In **Ukraine, Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania**, and most republics of the former Soviet Union, tipping is not common but leaving change (totaling about 5%-8%) is much appreciated. In **Russia** you can tip the waiter 10%, but give it directly to him, as management might pocket anything left on the table. In **Turkey** a 10% tip is appreciated, but only in cash. In **Scandinavia** tipping is not routine. A 10% service charge may be added to your restaurant bill, but beyond that, nothing is expected. As you might expect, things are a bit more expensive in **Switzerland**, where the service charge is closer to 15%. In the **United Kingdom** the tip may or may not be included, and it will typically be 10-15%. If you see an “optional” charge on your bill, this is a suggestion for a tip — not a requirement.

Just about everywhere porters get $1 to $2 (or euros) per bag, and housekeepers get about $2 (or 2 euro) per day. Cab drivers do not expect more than a 10% tip, and are typically happy with rounded up fares or a few extra dollars.

**North Africa and The Middle East** Throughout much of the Muslim world the phenomenon of “baksheesh” covers not just tipping for services, but charitable giving to beggars and even small bribes. Americans are often aghast by how many people expect remuneration — the washroom attendant who opens the door, the museum guard who points a flashlight on an artifact, the man in the street who offers directions — but rest assured, the practice is ancient, widespread, and observed across all strata of society. Indeed, observant Muslims may appreciate the recipient’s giving them a chance to fulfill the religious dictate to be charitable. Remember, too, that many service workers depend on tips to survive. It’s a good idea to be as discreet as possible when tipping — as a sign of consideration for the recipient, and also to deter unwanted attention.

Otherwise, in most restaurants a tip is included in the bill, and you can add 5–10 percent above that. In hotels, the housekeeping staff will appreciate one or two dollars a day (or the equivalent in local cash); $1-$1.50 per bag for the porter; and cabdrivers should be very happy with 10–15 percent. Exceptions occur in **Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Qatar**, and **oil-rich Gulf nations** that have adopted practices more in line with their international clientele. Here, restaurant bills do not often include tips, so leave 15-20% (10-15% in Saudi Arabia.) Refrain from asking for doggie bags, as the leftover food is usually given to kitchen staff to bring home, or donated to the poor. Here, hotel tipping aligns with U.S. standards — $2-$3 for doormen, $2 a bag for porters, and about $2-$5 per day for housekeeping. In **Morocco** and **most of North Africa**, look to see if your restaurant or bar tab says “service compris” or “service non compris.” If it is “non,” a tip of 10% would be generous. Cab fares should be rounded up to the nearest ten dirham note.

It is forbidden for non-Muslims to enter mosques in many places, but where access is allowed, you should expect to tip the attendant who hands you a robe or minds your shoes the equivalent of 50 cents or a dollar (you will be required to remove your shoes before entering.)

**Israel** In restaurants the tip is routinely included in the bill, but you can add a few shekels per customer (they’re about three to the dollar) to show appreciation for good service. At hotels you may offer six shekels per bag for porters, 3–6 shekels per day for housekeepers. Can
drivers will appreciate a 10-15% tip. Use local currency — this is one place where dollars are not accepted.

**Africa** Always keep small bills handy (in U.S. or local currency) as making small change can be difficult in remote areas. Consider, too, that it may be difficult for locals to exchange foreign currency. Some places may add a tip to the bill or use a tip box so that tips are combined and split among staff. You can certainly tip an individual for good service, just be discreet. In restaurants if your bill does not include service, leave 10-15%. A dollar per night to the housekeeping staff, and a dollar per bag to the porter are sufficient. Cab drivers will appreciate about 10%. In **South Africa** you may come across “car guards” or airport porters who are not officially employed but tolerated (even encouraged) by local authorities to mitigate the high unemployment rate. They subsist entirely on tips, which should be paid in local currency — about 15-30 rand, depending on service.

**Latin America** Tips are not automatically expected outside big cities or tourist areas. In **Argentina**, expect to add 10% to a restaurant bill. In **Chile**, the service charge added to your bill may be a small cubierto (cover charge) of 5% or so, so an additional 10% will be appreciated. In **Colombia**, the bill typically includes an 8% to 10% tip, and it’s common to add some more, bringing the total tip closer to 15% to 18%. (Interestingly, here you may also be asked “cuantos quotas?” when you pay by credit card, meaning “over how many months do you want your payment to extend?” Just say “uno” or “one.” In **Brazil**, 10% is routinely added to your restaurant bill, with no additional tip required. In **Costa Rica**, no restaurant tip is required. In most places taxi fares can just be rounded up. If you are using the remisses (local car services), a tip of 10% will do. For porterage tips, about a dollar per bag is sufficient. Leave $2 per day for the hotel maid, and tip $2 per bag to the porter. (Standards in **Costa Rica** are a little less….).Locals do not tip in **Peru**, but you will be expected to leave 10%-15% percent for the waiter, one sol (50 cents) per bag for the porter, 4–10 soles per night for the housekeeper. Cabbies don’t expect tips, as the fares are usually negotiated in advance.

**North America** In **Canada**, as in the U.S., the gratuity isn’t included here, so tip the standard 15% to 20% percent in restaurants. Because hotel staff changes each day, tip the housekeeper daily, about $2-$4 per day. Porters receive about $2 per bag. Taxi drivers get to 15 percent. U.S. dollar bills are accepted, but coins are not appreciated. In **Mexico** add 10%-15% to restaurant bills. At hotels about 10–20 pesos per bag is expected for the porter, and 20–50 pesos per night for the housekeeper. Mexican pesos are preferred.

**Asia** Tipping expectations vary widely throughout the region. In **Japan** it may be considered rude, even insulting, to leave a tip. If you do want to leave a small gratuity, do so in yen, and be very respectful about it. In **China**, officially, there is no tipping whatsoever. Fine hotels here may compensate by adding compulsory service fee of 10–20 percent, but nothing is expected or even technically allowed beyond that. If you do feel compelled to tip, do so discreetly, out of sight of employers. However, for porters 10 yuan per bag is standard. In **Thailand**, **Cambodia**, and **Vietnam**, the tip is not usually included, so waiters will deeply appreciate a tip of $1-$2 per diner. If you happen to have a $2 bill, it will be deeply appreciated, as they are believed to bring good luck! In **Malaysia** and **Indonesia**, a 10% service charge is usually added to the bill, and you can leave spare change as an extra bonus. Hotel staff will be pleased with the usual $1-$2 per bag, or per day (for house cleaning). In general, taxi and rickshaw drivers do not count on tips, but you can let them keep the change—up to 10 percent. Just about everyone else will want tips, but beware as you dispense your largesse, lest you find yourself swarmed.

**Australia and New Zealand** Tipping is appreciated here but it is certainly not built into the culture as in the U.S. Feel free to leave 10% to 15 percent for the waiter, a dollar per bag (in either Australian or New Zealand dollars), and $1–$5 per day to the housekeeper. Ten percent for cabdrivers is generous.
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