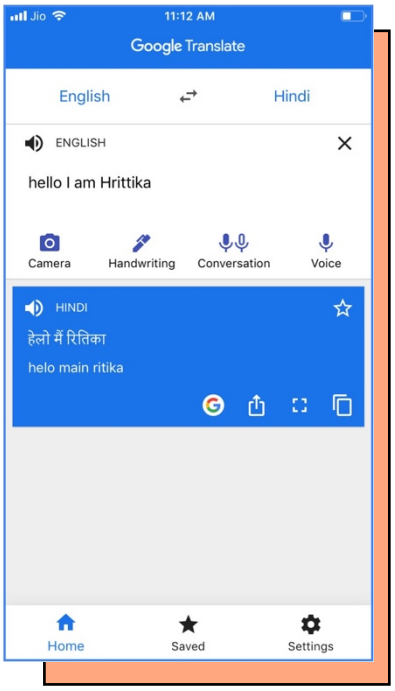
Top 10 Travel Tips

A Not-So-Intimidating Introduction

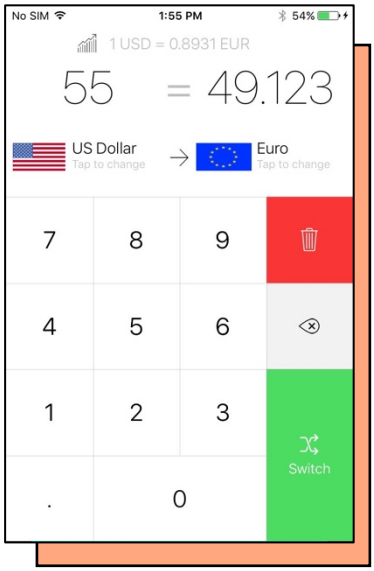
Have you ever wanted to travel internationally but have been so intimidated by all that goes into it that you have settled for less-than-ideal vacations? Settle no more! With these tips, you will be able to feel confident in travel planning, no matter the destination you pick. These tips will help you navigate all aspects of overseas travel – from planning to experiencing. Follow along and before you know it, you'll be having your own adventures.



1. Don't Underestimate the Power of Google Translate

Download the Google Translate app on your phone and once in the app, download any languages native to the places you're traveling to. This allows you to use any of the following functions offline. Whether you have an international phone plan or not, it's always good to ensure most of your applications can run without being connected to internet. This app is packed with many useful and convenient features. It includes a camera to translate written languages, a dictionary and conversation function.

2. Use a Currency Converter



Download a currency converter to your phone and ensure it can run effectively offline. Before you go, check that it has the currency of the country you will be visiting. Decide how much cash you will bring, then decide if you would like to convert it when you get to your destination. U.S. dollars are typically good anywhere, but you may lose money if you continue to use your U.S. currency. If you can, avoid converting your currency in the airport – the conversion rates will always be higher, and you will lose more money.

3. Step Outside Your Comfort Zone

Don't be afraid to talk to strangers. Ask locals your questions. Try that excursion. Whatever it looks like for you to step out of your comfort zone – do that. It's difficult to experience a new culture and a new country if you aren't willing to try new things and put yourself out there. Just think, you never know what you might learn or find out you love if you don't try new experiences. Odds are there will be plenty of new experiences -- after all, you are going overseas.

4. Get Recommendations from Locals

Always ask your waiter what they suggest for food and beverages, especially when you use Google Translate on the menu and you still don't know what you're ordering. Locals always know what the favorites are, and they can help you navigate your way around the menu. There's also a bonus – it helps you talk to strangers!

5. Go Beyond the Typical Vacation Spots

Touristy locations can be great, but you shouldn't limit your experience to just that. Exploring some not-so-touristy locations can help you to get a real feel for the culture. Try to explore as many towns as you can. Take the scenic routes. Don't just go to restaurants that you're familiar with. Go to the hole-in-the-wall places. You won't regret it.

6. Do Your Research Before You Go

Before you step foot on a plane, you need to do some research. Research the culture, the political climate, the weather and the places and restaurants you want to try. Researching the culture is absolutely crucial. Some countries have more modest cultures – this is often most directly seen in choice of clothing. In order to respect the cultures you are stepping into, you need to know what's appropriate to wear and what's not. You should always know the political climate before you go anywhere. There could be wars, protests or general unrest. Check before you plan a vacation.

7. Register with The State Department

On the State Department's website, there is an option to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. This will allow you to receive alerts and be located in an emergency. The Department of State's website will also have the address and contact information of the U.S. Embassies in each country. There may be more than one depending on which country you travel to.

8. Take Photos

Capture all your memories with photos. You may even want to bring a Polaroid or a disposable camera. You will always regret not taking enough pictures, but you will never regret taking too many. You can go for artistic shots of historical monuments or just your classic family photos – whatever you decide, make sure you have a special way to remember your adventures.

9. Remember: Your Culture is Not Their Culture

If you come from the West and go to the East – don't expect to encounter the exact same perspective. Put your own prerogative to the side. Remember that this culture is unique, beautiful and different from your own. Explore those differences and try not to let your own perceptions keep you from seeing that. Some cultural differences may seem frustrating if you aren't used to them. So, be patient and remember you aren't in the U.S. For example, some countries value meals as a social event to enjoy and linger at, not just a task to complete. Remember to look for and appreciate the value in these differences.

10. Stay safe and have fun

Make sure you always exercise safety and caution when going to new places. Always have a phone on you. It may be helpful to carry a photo copy of your passport and leave your actual passport in a safe where you are staying. Decide what works best for you, but remember to keep an eye on your belongings and always have some form of acceptable ID. This will most often be your passport. Explore, discover and be amazed. Remember to have fun and enjoy your vacation!