

Vacation Travel Smarts

Make your vacation a great one

Whether you're planning a trip to a local attraction in OH this summer, or headed overseas, you want your vacation to be relaxing. It's a getaway from work, not to mention your day-to-day life. So we've got some tips - from packing smart to protecting yourself from pickpockets - to make your trip the best it can be.

Before you go

Even if you're only headed across the state to Cleveland, a packing list is a must. How many times have you left home and arrived at your destination, only to find that you forgot your most comfortable walking shoes? Or your swimsuit? Put *everything* on this list, even if you think you would never forget it. A toothbrush is easy to replace when you get there - your prescription medication isn't.

Be sure that you have printed itineraries for everyone in your party, and make color copies of important ID documents as well. Keep the copies in your bag, separate from your passport and other IDs. It's also a great idea for each person to have a list of emergency numbers, either for them to call or for someone else providing assistance.

Of course, packing light can make travel a lot more enjoyable. Who wants to lug 100 pounds of luggage through the airport? Not us. Here are some ideas to help you lighten the load:

- **Do laundry at your destination.** Nobody *wants* to do laundry on vacation, but if you're willing to sacrifice a little time, you can pack far fewer items of clothing. If you won't have access to facilities, you can wash clothes in the hotel sink and hang them up to dry.
- **Easy on the shoes.** If you can, pack only one or two pairs of shoes. It's best to wear the heavier pair during travel if possible, and pack the lighter one.
- **Ditch the books.** Consider using an e-reader instead of packing actual books - that way you can carry hundreds of books on your trip! If you don't own or want an e-reader, you can buy books once you reach your destination. Thrift shops are great places to find inexpensive books.
- **If flying, don't check your bag.** This will not only force you to take smaller pieces of luggage, but with most airlines charging checked-baggage fees, it will save you money! It saves you the hassle of baggage claim, too.

When you're there

Once you arrive at your destination, it's time to relax! But don't let your guard down completely. After all, tourists often are targets for those looking to separate you from your money. We're talking mainly about

thieves, but don't forget, you also lose money when you spend more than needed. Here are some ways to protect your wallet from criminals and other money traps:

- **Don't carry much cash.** Most places accept credit cards, and those that don't often have ATMs on site.
- **If you carry a wallet, keep it in your front pocket. For a purse, hang it across your body.** Both will make it more difficult for a thief. You could also consider carrying a money belt, which is a good way to conceal cash and cards.



- **Staying at a hotel?** Check to see if they have “resort fees.” More and more hotels are charging these, which often provide things that used to be included in your room rate (such as access to the fitness center). Some will waive it if you complain — and it can be worth complaining because the fee can be \$10 – \$25 *each day*.
- **Eating out too much?** If your hotel room has a refrigerator, you can easily purchase and store sandwich ingredients for a cheap lunch or dinner. Many people find it more economical to rent a condominium or house for their vacation and cook most of their own meals. The money saved on restaurants can make up for any cost difference between a condo and hotel.
- **Think about travel insurance.** Yes, this costs money up front. But if you have a long and expensive vacation planned, travel insurance can end up *saving* you a lot of money if something goes wrong and you need to come home early or even cancel your entire trip. Depending on the coverage you purchase, you could receive reimbursement for additional airfare, hotel charges and more.

Finally, remember that you’re on vacation to relax and escape everyday life. So when you get there, get out there! Meet some locals, do some things off the beaten path. In fact, the locals usually have the best recommendations. And you just might make some new friends, too!