

FAVOR TRAVEL TOURS & TICKETS

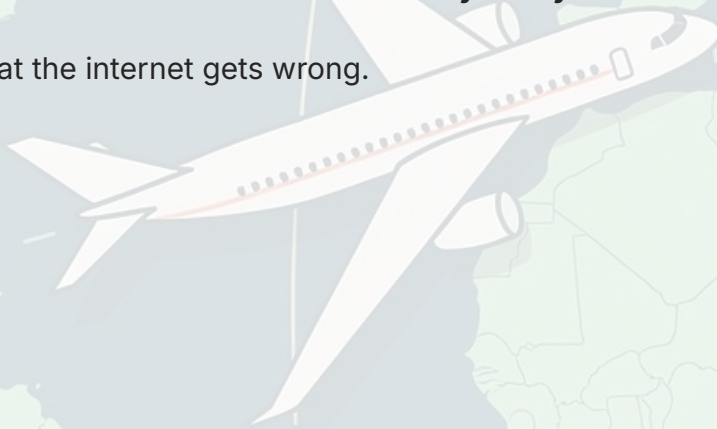
This guide is not a list of top destinations or hidden gems. You can find those anywhere.

This is the guide that the travel industry does not write because it is not in their interest to tell you some of these things. It is what we tell our clients before they travel - the real advice, not the version that makes everything sound perfect.

Travel in 2025-2026 is genuinely different from what it was. Flights are delayed more. Hotel quality has become less predictable. Prices at the destination are higher. Crowds at popular sites are heavier. And the traveler who adjusts their expectations accordingly has a far better trip than the one who does not.

That is where we start. **What nobody tells you before you travel.**

What the internet gets wrong.



SECTION 1 | Managing Expectations

INSIDE THIS GUIDE:

- ✓ Documents: the checklist that has saved travelers from being stranded
- ✓ Safety abroad: what actually keeps you safe (not what travel blogs say)
- ✓ Packing: what to bring, what to leave, what to buy when you arrive
- ✓ The phrases that work in any country even if you speak zero of the language
- WHAT HAS CHANGED AND HOW TO ADJUST
- ✓ Book early vs. last minute: the honest answer with real numbers

WHAT CHANGED	WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU
Flight delays and cancellations are significantly more frequent	Never book a tight connection. Minimum 2 hours domestic, 3 hours international. Build in a buffer day before any cruise or tour departure.
Hotel quality is less consistent than it was pre-2020	Read reviews from the last 3 months only. A hotel that was excellent in 2019 may have changed ownership, staff, or maintenance standards.
Popular sites are more crowded, especially in summer	Colosseum, Sagrada Familia, Louvre: timed entry is now required or strongly recommended. Walk-up queues at peak season are 2-3 hours. Book before you fly.
Service quality varies more than it used to	Patience is now a legitimate travel skill. Have a backup plan for restaurants, excursions, and experiences you care most about.
Prices at destination have risen significantly	Budget 20-30% more than pre-2020 estimates for food, transport, and experiences. What cost 15 euros now costs 22.
Travel insurance matters more than it ever did	A single flight cancellation or medical incident abroad without insurance costs what most people spend on 3-4 vacations. Buy it. Always.

THE HONEST EXPECTATION-SETTING FRAMEWORK

Before every trip, ask yourself one question: What are the 3 things that absolutely must go right for this trip to feel successful?

Not 30 things. Three. Write them down.

Those three things get your attention and your backup plans. Everything else is flexible. This single habit separates travelers who come home happy from travelers who come home disappointed - regardless of what actually happened.

 **Honest tip:** The best trip you ever take will still have one day that does not go as planned. Build that day into your expectations before you leave and it becomes a story instead of a disaster.

SECTION 2 | Documents: The Checklist That Prevents Disasters

Documents: What Gets Travelers Stranded, Denied Boarding, or Stuck at a Border

Document problems are the most preventable travel disasters. They are also the ones with the least sympathy from airlines, cruise lines, and border agents. No one waits for you.

THE UNIVERSAL DOCUMENTS CHECKLIST

- ■ Passport valid for at least 6 months beyond your return date (many countries require this)
- ■ Visa requirements checked at travel.state.gov for every country on your itinerary
- ■ Travel insurance purchased: covers medical emergency, trip cancellation, evacuation
- ■ Copies of all documents emailed to yourself and one person not traveling with you
- ■ Physical photocopy of passport photo page kept separate from original passport
- ■ STEP program registered at step.state.gov (free US citizen emergency notification)
- ■ Credit card travel benefits checked: some cards cover trip delays, lost luggage, medical
- ■ Emergency contacts saved offline on your phone (not only in contacts requiring data)
- ■ Prescription medications in original labeled bottles with enough supply plus 3 extra days
- ■ Travel adapter for destination country (check before packing, not at the airport)
- ■ Local currency or card that works abroad: verify your card has no foreign transaction fee
- ■ Hotel confirmation addresses saved offline for taxi or rideshare on arrival

IF YOU ARE A US RESIDENT BUT NOT A US CITIZEN

Non-citizens departing the US must carry: a valid passport with a multiple re-entry visa or permit, your physical Green Card (Permanent Resident Card), all necessary entry visas for each country on your itinerary, and an income tax clearance if applicable.

Important: Some countries on group tour itineraries may not permit the operator to include non-citizen residents under a group visa. Contact Favor Travel immediately if this applies to you so alternative arrangements can be made before departure.

Visa processing can take several months. If you need a visa and it is denied - and you are unable to travel as planned - standard cancellation terms apply. Start the process as early as possible.

DOCUMENTS THAT CATCH PEOPLE OFF GUARD

UK ETA (Electronic Travel Authorization): Required since January 2025 for US citizens visiting the UK. Apply at gov.uk/eta before you fly. GBP 10. Takes minutes. Without it: you may be denied boarding your flight to the UK.

Europe ETIAS: Launching 2025-2026 for non-EU travelers including US citizens visiting Schengen countries. Watch travel.state.gov for the live date. It will be required for France, Spain, Italy, Greece, and 26 other countries.

Cruise passengers: If you sail on a closed-loop US cruise (departs and returns to same US port), US citizens can use a birth certificate and government photo ID instead of a passport - but only if you never leave the ship at a foreign port or fly home separately. One missed port changes everything.

Children traveling with one parent: A notarized letter from the absent parent is required or strongly recommended in many countries including Canada, Mexico, and most Caribbean nations.

SECTION 3 | Safety Abroad: What Actually Works

Safety Abroad: The Practical Version

Most travel safety advice is either obvious or fear-based. This section is neither. These are the habits that actually reduce risk without turning your trip into an anxious exercise in avoidance.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

- ■ Share your full itinerary with one person at home: hotels, flight numbers, approximate daily plans
- ■ Save the address and phone number of the nearest US Embassy or Consulate at each destination
- ■ Know the local emergency number: 112 works in most of Europe, 999 in the UK, 911 in North America
- ■ Set up location sharing with one trusted contact for the duration of the trip
- ■ Enable Find My iPhone or Google Find My Device and test it before you leave
- ■ Photograph the front and back of every card in your wallet before departure
- ■ Notify your bank of your travel dates and destinations to prevent card freezes
- ■ Download offline maps for every destination: no data needed once downloaded

IN A FOREIGN CITY: THE HABITS THAT ACTUALLY MATTER

REDUCE YOUR RISK

- Keep your phone in a front pocket or zipped bag - never a back pocket in crowded areas
- Use a crossbody bag with a zipper, not a backpack at busy tourist sites
- Carry a photocopy of your passport in the city - leave the original in the hotel safe
- Walk with purpose even when you are lost: looking at your phone on a corner marks you as a tourist
- In restaurants and cafes: bag goes on your lap or between your feet, not on the chair behind you
- ATMs: use machines attached to banks during business hours, not standalone machines at night
- If someone approaches you with an unusual story or petition: keep walking politely
- Trust your instincts: if a situation feels wrong, leave it without needing to explain why

IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG

- Lost passport: contact the nearest US Embassy immediately. They handle this every day.
- Card stolen: call the number on the back of your card (saved in your email before you left)
- Medical emergency: call 112 in Europe. Your travel insurance has a 24/7 emergency line.
- Mugging: give them what they ask for. Nothing you own is worth a physical confrontation abroad.
- Scam or overcharge: do not escalate. Pay what you agreed to and leave. Report to hotel.
- Arrested or detained: ask for the US Embassy contact and say nothing else until they arrive.

WHAT DOES NOT ACTUALLY HELP

- Expensive anti-theft bags: common sense is more effective
- Money belts: visible fumbling at them is a signal in itself
- Avoiding all local transport: local buses and metros are generally very safe

SECTION 3 | Health: What to Know Before You Leave

Travel Health: Vaccinations, Medications, and What to Carry

The health preparation most travelers skip is the one that matters most when something goes wrong abroad. This section covers what to do before departure - not after you need it. This is NOT medical advise, talk to your doctor about ANY conditions.

VACCINATIONS

- ✓ Check travel.state.gov and cdc.gov/travel for vaccination recommendations specific to your destination. Requirements change - verify within 4-6 weeks of departure, not 6 months out.
- ✓ Most Favor Travel destinations (Israel, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Caribbean) do not require proof of specific vaccines for entry, but health conditions in each country vary. Your physician is the right source for personalized recommendations based on your health history.
- ✓ Some destinations recommend (not require) Hepatitis A, Typhoid, and updated Tetanus. Egypt and Jordan: Hepatitis A is commonly recommended. Caribbean: check for any active outbreaks at your island.

MEDICATIONS: WHAT TO CARRY AND HOW

ALWAYS IN CARRY-ON, NEVER CHECKED

- All prescription medications - checked bags are lost or delayed more often than you think
- Enough supply for your trip PLUS 3-4 extra days (weather, delays happen)
- Copies of prescriptions (photo on your phone is fine)
- EpiPen or emergency medication if applicable
- CPAP machine and power adapter if used (distilled water cannot be carried - buy at destination)
- Contact lens solution: available in most countries but bring enough to not worry about it

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABROAD

- Brand names may not exist: bring generics or know the active ingredient name
- Prescription medications cannot be obtained at a foreign pharmacy without a local prescription
- Medications do not need to be in original bottles for international travel: daily/weekly organizers are fine
- CPAP users: distilled water is not available everywhere. Buy locally when you arrive.

OVER-THE-COUNTER TO PACK

- Anti-diarrheal medication (Imodium): most useful OTC item abroad
- Pain reliever and fever reducer
- Antihistamine for unexpected allergic reactions
- Antacid: rich food in new cuisines affects most travelers
- Motion sickness medication if prone (Bonine is less drowsy than Dramamine)
- Blister treatment: you will walk more than you expect

TRAVEL INSURANCE FOR HEALTH

- A single emergency room visit abroad without insurance can cost \$5,000-50,000 USD
- Medical evacuation (flying home for serious care) costs \$50,000-250,000 without coverage
- Your US health insurance likely does not cover you abroad: verify before you go
- Travel insurance medical coverage of \$100,000+ is strongly recommended for international travel
- Save the 24/7 emergency line from your policy in your phone before departure

CLOTHING FOR SPECIFIC DESTINATIONS

DESTINATION TYPE	REQUIRED	RECOMMENDED	AVOID
Churches and religious sites (Italy, Greece)	Shoulders covered, knees covered for entry	Light scarf or shawl to put on at entrances	Sleeveless tops, shorts, short skirts
Mosques and Muslim sites (Turkey, Egypt, Jordan)	Shoulders covered, knees covered, shoes removable, women cover hair	Carry a scarf for head covering (women)	Sandals without socks (feet must be covered or bare for prayer areas)
Israel (Western Wall)	Head covering for men at the Wall, modest dress for women	Kippah available free at the Wall for men	Shorts, sleeveless tops at the Wall itself
Caribbean beaches	No restrictions at resorts	Rash guard for sun protection	Swimwear in restaurants or non-beach areas
General sightseeing all destinations	Comfortable walking shoes	Light layers for evening, scarf for sun	New shoes you have not broken in yet

 **Honest tip:** A light scarf or shawl takes zero space and weighs almost nothing. It solves the dress code requirement at every religious site in every country. Pack one regardless of where you are going.

SECTION 4 | Packing: The System That Actually Works

Packing: What to Bring, What to Leave, What to Buy When You Arrive

The traveler who overpacks is easy to spot and harder to move. The traveler who underpacks is easy to spot and easier to move. The goal is neither.

THE UNIVERSAL PACKING RULE

Lay out everything you plan to pack. Remove one third of it. That is what you actually need.

Then ask: if I bought this at the destination, how much would it cost? For most items in most countries the answer is: not much. Shampoo, sunscreen, snacks, and most clothing can be purchased locally. Medications, specific prescription items, and travel documents cannot.

WHAT BELONGS IN CARRY-ON - ALWAYS, NO EXCEPTIONS

- All prescription medications in bottles with a clear name - checked luggage is sometimes lost for days
- Passport and all travel documents
- One complete change of clothes for every traveler
- Phone charger and any essential electronics
- Valuables: jewelry, expensive camera equipment
- Any irreplaceable items
- First night hotel confirmation address saved offline
- Contact lenses, glasses, and solution if worn

LEAVE AT HOME

- More than 2 pairs of shoes beyond walking shoes and sandals
- Full-size toiletries: travel size or buy at destination
- Books (more than one): weight vs. reading time ratio is poor
- Clothes for "just in case" situations that never happen
- Jewelry you would be distressed to lose
- Anything that requires ironing
- More than one formal outfit unless the trip specifically requires it
- Gifts for every person you might see: ship them or buy locally

BUY AT THE DESTINATION

- Sunscreen: cheaper and locally appropriate SPF
- Snacks and bottled water: buy at a local supermarket not the airport
- Small souvenirs: wait until the last day so you are not carrying them
- Basic clothing forgotten at home: a t-shirt or sandals are available everywhere

ALWAYS BRING FROM HOME

- All prescription medications plus 3 extra days supply
- Travel adapter (verify for your destination country)
- Portable battery pack: you photograph more than you expect
- Any items hard to find in the destination country

LUGGAGE SIZE AND WEIGHT: THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

LUGGAGE TYPE but check with your specific Airline	MAXIMUM SIZE but check with your specific Airline	MAXIMUM WEIGHT but check with your specific Airline	NOTES
Checked bag (transatlantic)	62 linear inches total (L+W+H)	50 lbs / 23 kg	Overweight/oversize fees paid directly to airline at check-in
Carry-on bag	45 linear inches total	16 lbs / 7 kg	Must fit in overhead bin
Personal item	Under-seat dimensions vary by airline	No standard limit	Backpack, camera bag, or small tote

- ✓ Weigh your checked bag at home before leaving. Airline overweight fees at the check-in counter average \$100-200 each way and cannot be avoided once you are at the airport.
- ✓ Pack and repack items in the same order every time - you will locate what you need without unpacking entirely. Roll soft items and place them at the bottom. Use shoe interiors for small items like socks.

THE CARRY-ON ONLY CHALLENGE

For trips of 7 nights or less: seriously consider carry-on only. No checked bag fees (\$35-75 each way on most US carriers). No waiting at baggage claim. No risk of lost luggage. No 25kg limit on your shopping.

- ✓ A well-packed carry-on with packing cubes holds more than most people think. 7 nights of clothing for one person fits in a standard carry-on when rolled and organized.
- ✓ Wear your bulkiest items on the plane: the heavy jacket, the walking boots, the jeans. Pack the lighter alternatives.

SECTION 5 | Language: The Phrases That Actually Work

Language: You Do Not Need to Be Fluent. You Need Five Phrases.

Learning the local language is wonderful and unrealistic for most travelers. Learning five specific phrases is realistic for everyone and makes a significant difference in how you are received. Here is what to learn and why each one works.

WHY THESE FIVE PHRASES SPECIFICALLY

These phrases work for one reason: they signal respect, not competence. A local who hears you attempt their language - even badly - responds differently than to someone who opens with English and speaks loudly.

You do not need to say them perfectly. The effort is what communicates.

THE FIVE PHRASES: SPANISH (MEXICO / CARIBBEAN / SPAIN)

PHRASE	PRONUNCIATION	USE IT WHEN
Hola, buenos dias	OH-lah BWAY-nos DEE-as	Every time you enter a shop, restaurant, or approach anyone
Por favor	por fah-VOR	Any request. Attach it to everything. Changes the entire tone.
Gracias	GRAH-see-as	After any interaction. Always.
Disculpe, habla ingles?	dis-KOOL-peh AH-blah een-GLACE	Before switching to English. This one phrase changes everything.
Cuanto cuesta?	KWAN-toh KWES-tah	How much does this cost? Works at any market or shop.

THE FIVE PHRASES: FRENCH (FRANCE / FRENCH CARIBBEAN)

PHRASE	PRONUNCIATION	USE IT WHEN
Bonjour / Bonsoir	bon-ZHOOR / bon-SWAHR	Morning/afternoon vs. evening. Use one of these to open every interaction.
S'il vous plait	seel voo PLAY	Please. Every request. Non-negotiable in France.
Merci beaucoup	mare-SEE bo-KOO	Thank you very much. Use liberally.
Parlez-vous anglais?	par-LAY voo ahn-GLAY	Do you speak English? Say this before switching languages.
L'addition, s'il vous plait	lah-dee-SYON seel voo PLAY	The bill, please. Waiters in France do not bring it until you ask.

THE FIVE PHRASES: ITALIAN (ITALY / MEDITERRANEAN PORTS)

PHRASE	PRONUNCIATION	USE IT WHEN
Buongiorno / Buonasera	bwon-JOR-no / bwona-SAIR-a	Good morning/afternoon vs. good evening. Opens every door.
Per favore	pair fah-VOR-ay	Please. Attach to every request.
Grazie	GRAHT-see-eh	Thank you. Short, easy, universally appreciated.
Parla inglese?	PAR-la een-GLAY-zeh	Do you speak English? Locals genuinely appreciate the attempt.
Il conto, per favore	eel KON-toh pair fah-VOR-ay	The bill, please. Same rule as France: ask for it.

THE FIVE PHRASES: GREEK (GREECE / GREEK ISLANDS)

PHRASE	PRONUNCIATION	USE IT WHEN
Kalimera / Kalispera	kah-lee-MEH-rah / kah-lee-SPEH-rah	Good morning vs. good evening. Greeks use these constantly.
Parakalo	pah-rah-kah-LOH	Please AND you're welcome. One word, two uses.
Efharisto	ef-hah-ree-STOH	Thank you. Worth learning - Greeks light up when visitors try.
Milas anglika?	MEE-lahs ahn-GLEE-kah	Do you speak English?
Poso kani?	POH-soh KAH-nee	How much does this cost?

THE UNIVERSAL BACKUP: ONE PHRASE THAT WORKS ANYWHERE

Point to what you want. Smile. Say the number of items using your fingers. Hold up your card or cash.

This works in every country in every language and has worked for centuries.

Language apps like Google Translate with camera translation and offline language packs work well for menus, signs, and written text. Download the language pack before you leave home so it works without data.

SECTION 6 | Book Early vs. Last Minute: The Honest Answer

Book Early vs. Last Minute: The Honest Answer With Real Numbers

This question has no universal answer. It depends entirely on what you are booking, when, and where. Here is what actually happens with prices and availability for the most common travel categories.

WHAT YOU ARE BOOKING	BOOK EARLY WINS	LAST MINUTE WINS	THE HONEST ANSWER
International flights	Yes: 2-4 months ahead	Rarely	Prices spike 3-4 weeks before. Best window: 6-10 weeks out for most routes.
Popular hotel in peak season	Yes: 3-6 months ahead	No	Top properties in Paris, Rome, Santorini in July sell out completely. Book early or choose a different date.
Hotel in shoulder season	Sometimes	Sometimes	Hotels discount to fill rooms. If your dates are flexible, last minute (3-7 days out) can save 20-40%.
All-inclusive resort	Yes: 4-6 months out	Occasionally	Some resorts discount heavily 2-3 weeks before to fill capacity. Requires very flexible dates.
Cruise cabin (standard)	Yes: 6-12 months	Sometimes: 30-60 days	Worst time: 2-5 months before sailing. Both early and late beat the middle.
Timed-entry tickets (Colosseum, Vatican, Louvre)	Yes: months ahead	No	These sell out. Period. No last-minute option at peak season.
Restaurants (popular)	Yes: weeks to months	Rare	Top restaurants in major cities book out weeks ahead. Check at 8am when cancellations are released.
Car rental	Yes: book early, cancel free	Rarely	Rental car prices have tripled since 2020. Book early with free cancellation and rebook if prices drop.

The general rule: For experiences and places with limited capacity (specific hotels, popular restaurants, timed-entry attractions, cruise sailings in peak months) - book early.

For flexible commodities (hotels in off-peak season, some all-inclusives, rental cars if you watch prices) - compare early prices, book with free cancellation, and rebook if you find better.

For flights: never book in the final 3 weeks unless you have no choice. Prices are highest there.

SECTION 7 | Flight Delays: Your Rights and the Right Sequence

Flight Delays and Disruptions: What to Do, In What Order

Flight disruptions are more common now than they have been at any point in recent aviation history. Knowing what to do in the first 15 minutes of a disruption determines whether you sleep in a hotel or an airport.

THE MOMENT YOUR FLIGHT IS DELAYED OR CANCELLED: THE SEQUENCE

1 Open the airline app immediately

Before you join any queue. The app often rebooking options faster than gate agents. Select your new flight through the app while standing in line - you may rebook yourself before you reach the counter.

2 Call the airline's main number simultaneously

Airport gate agents have limited options. The main reservations line has more. Put yourself on hold and wait - the call may connect faster than the gate queue moves. Have your frequent flyer number ready.

3 Check Google Flights for available alternatives

Know what is available before you talk to an agent. If you ask for a specific flight by number, you are more likely to get it than if you ask "what can you do for me."

4 Document everything

Photograph the departure board showing the delay or cancellation. Screenshot any notifications you receive. This is required for travel insurance claims and EU261 compensation (if applicable).

5 Know your rights

US domestic: airlines are not legally required to compensate for weather delays. For cancellations caused by the airline, you are entitled to a full refund if you choose not to travel. EU/UK flights: EU261 provides compensation of 250-600 EUR depending on flight length for delays over 3 hours caused by the airline (not weather).

6 Ask specifically what they can offer

Meal vouchers for delays over 3 hours are sometimes available and not always offered proactively. Hotel accommodation for overnight delays caused by the airline (not weather) can be requested.

 **The most important habit:** Never book a separate tickets and a connection tighter than 2 hours domestic or 3 hours international. One delay makes a 75-minute connection a missed flight and a hotel stay.

The night-before rule: Check your flight status the night before departure. A cancellation discovered at home gives you 12 hours to rebook. The same cancellation discovered at the airport gives you 2 hours.

Travel insurance: If your delay is caused by the airline and exceeds the threshold in your policy (usually 6 hours), you may be reimbursed for meals, transport, and accommodation. Keep every receipt.

SECTION 8 | Apps Every Traveler Should Have Before Leaving Home

Apps Every Traveler Should Have Before Leaving Home

These are not travel lifestyle apps. These are practical tools that solve real problems when you are abroad. Download them before you leave - not when you need them and have no data.

YOUR PHONE ABROAD: THREE OPTIONS

OPTION	COST	HOW IT WORKS	BEST FOR
International plan add-on	\$10-15/day with most US carriers	Call your carrier before departure. Add international coverage for the duration of your trip. Remove on return.	Short trips where convenience matters more than cost
eSIM (Airalo or similar)	\$10-18 for regional plan	Buy via app before you leave. Activates when you land. Keep your US number active for texts/calls home.	Most travelers - best value, works everywhere. Contact us for a referral discount link
Local SIM card	Varies by country, usually \$10-25	Buy at airport or local phone shop on arrival. Requires unlocked phone.	Longer trips, single-country travel
Wi-Fi only	Free (use hotel/cafe Wi-Fi)	Disable data roaming completely. Use WhatsApp and iMessage on Wi-Fi only. Do not recommended for any sensitive information.	Budget travelers or very short trips

⚠ Disable international data roaming **BEFORE** you land if you are not adding an international plan. Roaming charges without a plan can reach hundreds of dollars per day. Go to Settings before your flight.

APP	WHAT IT DOES	WHY IT MATTERS
Google Maps, Maps Me	Offline maps for any destination	Download your destination's map before you leave. Works with zero data or Wi-Fi. Never be lost.
Airalo	eSIM data for international travel	Buy a local data plan before you land. \$10-18 for most regions. Far cheaper than roaming or airport SIM cards.
Google Translate	Real-time camera translation	Point your camera at a menu, sign, or document in any language. Download the offline language pack before flying.
XE Currency	Real-time exchange rates	Know exactly what you are spending in local currency. Works offline once loaded.
Tripit	Organizes all your confirmations	Forward every booking confirmation email. It builds a master itinerary automatically.
WhatsApp	Free messaging and calls internationally	Works on Wi-Fi. Standard communication tool in most countries outside the US.
Your airline's app	Real-time flight status and rebooking	First thing to open when a flight is disrupted. Often faster than gate agents.
Your travel insurance app	24/7 emergency assistance	Save the emergency number before you leave. Know where the app is on your phone.
Flightly or FlightAware	Advanced flight tracking	Tells you about delays often before the airline announces them. Tracks incoming aircraft.
Notion or Notes app	Offline information storage	Paste all your booking confirmations, addresses, emergency numbers. Access without data.

SECTION 8 | Money Abroad: Cash, Cards, and Tipping

Money Abroad: Cash, Cards, and Tipping

COUNTRY / REGION	BEST PAYMENT METHOD	CASH NEEDED?	USD ACCEPTED?
Israel, Jordan, Egypt	Credit card at large establishments	Yes - small vendors, markets, tips	Yes - widely accepted
Turkey	Credit card + local lira for markets	Yes - bazaars, local transport	Partially - major tourist areas
Italy, Greece, France, Spain	Credit card nearly everywhere	Euros for small purchases	No - euros mostly
Caribbean (most islands)	Credit card + USD cash	USD cash for tips and markets	Yes - widely accepted
Mexico	Credit card + pesos	Pesos for local markets and tips	Yes in tourist areas
UK	Contactless card everywhere	Minimal	No - GBP only

PRACTICAL CASH TIPS

- ✓ Bring at least 50 single dollar bills for any Middle East or Caribbean trip. USD is widely accepted and useful for small purchases, tipping, and when you run out of local currency.
- ✓ Traveler checks are not recommended. Most hotels, restaurants, and shops no longer accept them. ATMs and credit cards have made them obsolete everywhere Favor Travel sends groups.
- ✓ Budget approximately \$15 USD or Euro per day for lunches and incidental purchases in most destinations. This varies significantly by country - Israel and Western Europe run higher, Egypt and Jordan run lower.
- ✓ Use ATMs attached to banks during business hours for the best exchange rates. Standalone machines in tourist areas often charge 5-8% fees. Airport currency exchange is almost always the worst rate.

TIPPING GUIDE BY DESTINATION

WHO	MIDDLE EAST (Israel/Jordan/Egypt)	EUROPE (Italy/Greece/Spain)	CARIBBEAN / MEXICO
Tour guide (full day)	\$10-15 USD per person	10-15 EUR per person	\$10-15 USD per person
Driver (full day)	\$5-10 USD per person	5-10 EUR per person	\$5-10 USD per person
Hotel porter (per bag)	\$1-2 USD per bag	1-2 EUR per bag	\$1-2 USD per bag
Restaurant (sit-down)	10-15% (not always expected)	10% (service often included)	15-20% standard
Housekeeping (per night)	\$2-3 USD	2-3 EUR	\$2-3 USD

 **Honest tip:** Tipping in cash, in local currency or USD, is always preferred over tipping on a credit card receipt. In many countries, credit card tips do not reach the individual who served you.

SECTION 9 | The Universal Pre-Trip Checklist

The Universal Pre-Trip Checklist: Works for Any Destination, Any Length

6+ WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE

- ■ Passport validity checked: 6+ months beyond return date
- ■ Visa requirements checked for every country on your itinerary
- ■ Travel insurance purchased (within 14-21 days of first deposit for pre-existing condition waiver)
- ■ Flights booked
- ■ Accommodation booked for all nights
- ■ Timed-entry tickets purchased for must-see attractions
- ■ Popular restaurants researched and reservations made where needed
- ■ Car rental booked with free cancellation if needed
- ■ STEP program registered at step.state.gov
- ■ Frequent flyer numbers added to all flight bookings
- ■ Credit card travel benefits reviewed: foreign transaction fees, travel insurance, lounge access
- ■ Bank notified of travel dates and destinations

2 WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE

- ■ Online check-in completed for all flights (opens 24 hours before for most airlines)
- ■ Mobile boarding passes downloaded and saved offline
- ■ Airalo eSIM purchased and set up for destination
- ■ Google Maps offline maps downloaded for all destinations
- ■ Google Translate offline language packs downloaded
- ■ All prescription medications confirmed with enough supply plus 3 extra days
- ■ Travel adapter packed and verified for destination country
- ■ Itinerary shared with one person at home
- ■ Accommodation addresses saved offline for taxi/rideshare on arrival
- ■ Emergency numbers saved: US Embassy, travel insurance 24/7 line, local emergency number
- ■ Packing started: lay out, remove one third, pack what remains
- ■ All booking confirmations copied to offline notes app

DAY BEFORE DEPARTURE

- ■ Flight status checked the evening before
- ■ All documents in carry-on: passport, boarding passes, insurance card
- ■ Photocopy of passport photo page in a separate bag from original
- ■ All medications in carry-on
- ■ Phone fully charged, backup battery pack fully charged
- ■ Power bank - check requirements with your Airline
- ■ Bags weighed if checking luggage (airline limit is usually 23kg / 50lbs)
- ■ Home secured: locks, lights, thermostat, plant watering arranged
- ■ Notify credit card company if not already done
- ■ Download any offline content (podcasts, shows) for the flight
- ■ Sleep: the most underrated pre-travel preparation

Every trip is different. This guide covers what works for most travelers in most situations.

If you are planning a specific trip and want an expert to look at your plans before you commit - that is exactly what we do. One conversation, no pressure, honest advice.

ROUTE CHECK - \$50

Send us your booked itinerary. We review timing, connections, accommodation choices, and anything we would do differently. Written response in 48 hours.

FULL ITINERARY DESIGN - \$100

Tell us your destination and dates. We build a complete day-by-day plan with every hotel linking to Google Maps.

FREE 20-MINUTE CALL

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