

## 1 Year – 6 Months Before You Travel

- Dream of the places you want to go. Decide if you want to travel on a tour or on your own. If a tour, find one that matches your travel style.
- Start watching flights. Set a fare alert with [Google Flights](#) or [Momondo](#). Enter the flight you want into the [Hopper App](#) and see when it indicates you should buy.
- If traveling on your own, start doing research. Consider crowds (can you travel in shoulder season?), weather, local holidays, safety, etc. (Research resources in the [Before You Go Abroad Handbook](#).)
- Check your passport has at least 6-month validity from when you plan to return. If it does not, order a new one. For why you need to do this, read [“Your Passport May Not be VALID for as Long as You Think!”](#) by Dan Bare.
- Learn a bit of the language. Try [Pimsleur](#) language systems, often available through local libraries, or the [Duolingo App](#).
- Apply for [Global Entry](#), or the Trusted Traveler Program that is right for you. (Details in the Before You Go Abroad Handbook.)
- Join the [Wild Spirit Travelers Facebook group](#) and post questions about your destination to get information from real travelers.
- If traveling during peak season or festival, make accommodations reservations well in advance. Two of our favorite reservation websites are [Agoda](#) and [Air B-n-B](#).
- Track down those long-lost relatives that live overseas and see if you can visit.

## 6 Months – 3 Months Out

- Book flights, if have not already done so. If taking a budget no-frills airline, read all the fine print. (More information in the [Before You Go Abroad Handbook](#).)
- Research tourist visas for your destinations at [travel.state.gov](#). If you have a layover, check to see if you need a transit visa. Apply for visas that you need before you go when appropriate—some are only valid for 30 days after you get it.
- Check out guidebooks to find one you like. A free online guide is [Wikitravel](#).
- If thinking of driving a moped when abroad, and you are not experienced with motor bikes, take lessons now.
- Verify your debit cards work on either the Plus or Cirrus systems. Have a Master Card and a Visa card that will work internationally (chip and pin cards are best). If applying for a new card, consider [Charles Schwab](#). Why Charles Schwab? Dan explains in the [Wild Spirit Travel YouTube video – Travel Tip Tuesday #14: Dan’s secret to avoiding ATM fees when traveling abroad](#).

- Research what vaccinations or tablets you need (if any) at [Centers for Disease Control](#) and consult with your doctor or a specialized travel clinic.
- Plan how you will stay connected when traveling such as traveling with your smart phone on the plan it is on (but this may be expensive), getting a local SIM card (your phone needs to be unlocked to do this), or buying a burner phone. You may prefer to keep in touch via free Wi-Fi options or apps such as What's App. To determine the best option for you, checkout the online video library at: <https://travelsmartstrategies.com/>
- Deal with travel phobias. Hypnotherapy worked for Shyla's fear of heights.
- Try out travel backpacks or roller bags. Find one that is comfortable for you. We travel with a [Rick Steves' Convertible Carry-on Bag](#).
- Consider joining an International Travel Club like [SERVAS](#) or the [Affordable Travel Club](#) so you will have local contacts when you travel.

### **3 Months – 1 Months Out**

- Book accommodation. If planning to make reservations as you go, still consider booking first and last nights. [HostelWorld](#) and [Booking.com](#) have apps that make making reservations as you travel easy.
- Reserve tickets for any special events or activities you want to do.
- Consider taking a cooking class, going on a free walking tour, hiring a guide, or setting up a meeting with a day host through [SERVAS](#) or [International Greeter Network](#).
- Make transport reservations for trains ([www.seat61.com](http://www.seat61.com)) and ferries ([www.aferry.com](http://www.aferry.com)) if needed in advance.
- Determine if you need travel insurance and compare options [Squaremouth.com/21890](http://Squaremouth.com/21890).
- Get a written prescription for all medicines you take. For more information on traveling with prescriptions read: [Traveling with Prescriptions: What NOT to Do](#)
- Buy good travel shoes, and break them in before your trip.
- Read novels/biographies and watch movies set in the countries you are going to. Try out restaurants with food from the country and order in the language to practice. These are all fun ways to be inspired about your trip.
- If you want, register your trip with [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#).
- Practice using your camera or taking photos with your smart phone in different lighting conditions so you will get great photos when on your vacation.
- If you are going to rent a car, research if you need an International Driver's License (available at AAA). If so, get it, but have it dated to start when you begin traveling. Also, research road rules and signs for your destination. (Details on finding international road information in [Before You Go Abroad Handbook](#).)
- Purchase a securable crossbody bag, such as [Travelon Anti-Theft Classic Crossbody Bag](#) or [Rick Steves' Veloce Guide Bag](#), and a [motion-detecting cable lock](#). Both are smart travel tools for keeping your stuff safe when abroad.

- Download great travel apps, such as Google Translate, to your smart phone. Practice using them so you are comfortable before your trip begins. To discover travel apps and more information on tech, check out <https://travelsmartstrategies.com/>

## **4 Weeks – 2 Weeks Out**

- Get an internet cloud account and upload important documents so you can access when overseas. Give a reliable family member a friend a copy of your insurance information, itinerary, and reservation details.
- Make a card in the local language, listing any food allergies or foods you want to avoid. Have the card laminated so you can easily hand it to wait staff.
- Do a practice pack. If pack is too heavy, eliminate some items or pack lighter versions. Find out the essentials you should pack in the Wild Spirit Travel Packing Smart class.
- Develop a plan on how to get from your point of entry (e.g. airport, train station) to your hotel. Contact your hotel to see if they have tips on the best way to do this.
- Check the voltage on all electronics you are taking, making sure they are compatible with the local voltage. If not consider buying a dual-voltage option, or leaving it at home. Get appropriate adaptors too.
- Get local currency from your credit union or bank so you will have a small amount when you arrive. AAA also sells many currencies.
- Decide on a backup plan for getting money when abroad. (Read about several options in the [Before You Go Abroad Handbook](#).)
- Make arrangements to get to your departure point (e.g. airport).

## **2 Weeks – to 1 Week Out**

- Notify your financial institutions and credit card companies of your travel dates. Let them know if any international charges will come in before your actual trip dates. Also, be sure to tell them all countries visiting, even if just for a layover.
- If you don't have a house sitter, turn in the "hold mail" form to the post office and stop newspaper delivery (if you get it).
- Get a small amount of crisp, clean American money in small denominations for emergencies. Make sure you have a security pouch or money belt to carry this, and all your essentials in.
- Buy postcards or small gifts you can leave with local hosts or people that help you during your journey.
- Make a souvenir shopping list, so you know who you want to buy gifts for. Research prices for anything you know in advance you want to buy so you know rates here and what is a good buy.
- Do another practice pack... is there still anything you still need? Buy it now!

## **7 Days – 2 Days**

- Confirm your flights and any accommodations reservations you have. Make sure you are clear on how you are getting to your first night's lodging. Have a back-up plan too.
- Take valuables that you are leaving at home to your safety deposit box, or hide them away somewhere very safe. Make yourself a "treasure map" so you can find things when you get home.
- Create your own final day to-do list. That way you will easily be able to run through all the last-minute things you want to do e.g. turn off lights, lock garage door, prepare a snack for the travel day, etc.
- Pack a mini comfort kit for travel days. Find out what Dan packs in his by watching the [Wild Spirit Travel YouTube video: Travel Tip Tuesday #5 – How to Pack a Comfort Kit.](#)

## **Day Before Departure**

- Do your final pack. Remember liquids in carry-on bags are limited by TSA to 3.4oz/100ml and 1-quart sized bag per traveler.
- Charge up all your electronics.
- Update foreign exchange rates in [XE Currency App](#) to easily convert when traveling.
- Check in online for your flight (or other transport you are taking) if that is an option.
- Set out the clothes you will be wearing on your travel day. Have your security pouch ready with your passport.
- If have an early departure, set your alarm clock. Perhaps set a second alarm just in case. If using cell phone, make sure volume is turned on.

## **Day of Departure**

- Go through your personal to-do list.
- Pack your electronics. Don't forget your chargers.
- Grab your passport and head off on the international trip of your dreams.
- Post photos and travel tips you learn on your journey in the [Wild Spirit Travelers Facebook group](#) to inspire others.

***HAPPY TRAVELS!***