

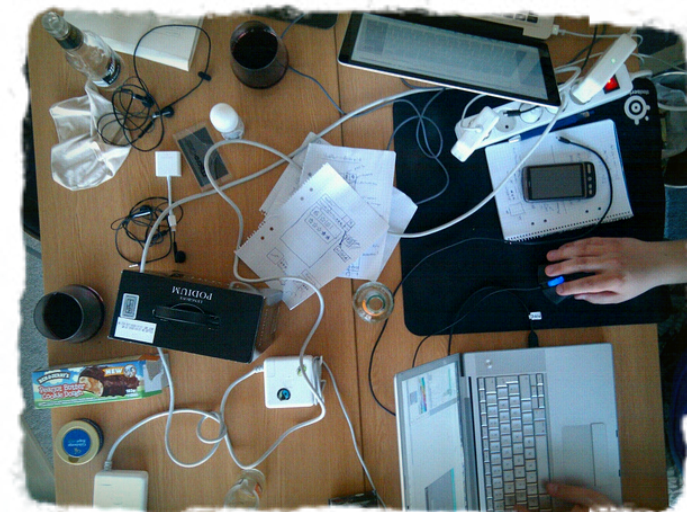
Trip Tips: Hacks from a Seasoned Traveler

Intro: What is a Travel Hack?

First of all, a hack is just a fancy word to name a shortcut or ingenious solution for some the most common travel problems that you didn't even know you had!

That's right—some travelers don't even see the problem coming until they experience the misfortune of being ill-prepared for the challenges they face during their travels. Luckily, [US City Traveler](#) is here to shed some light on the most amazing travel hacks, so you are in-the-know, before you go! Travel hacks are listed in this ebook in many shapes and forms to help the trip planning process, keep things running smooth and save you money on your travels. Not to mention, a simple travel hack has the power to transform frustration into admiration for such exceptional use of human intellect and ingenuity.

Among these travel hacks you will find ways to save money that are rarely advertised by airlines, hotels, credit card and rental car companies alike. These are the savings tips and tricks they didn't want you know, and for



good reason! You will be saving with each corner you cut along the way, so you don't wind up spending a fortune on next vacation. Take these tips from a seasoned traveler, you will be happy you learned to hack the travel experience by saving money and precious time—if you stick to this unique insider's guide.

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For Reservations and Cancellations

#1 Avoid Cancellation Fees—One simple hack can be the difference between losing a deposit or getting your money back on a hotel reservation. To execute this hack, call the desk of the hotel where you placed the reservation, and ask to reschedule the stay to a later date—one that is past the minimum time it takes to receive the deposit back. Now, watch the clock to assure your next callback is after shift change to speak to a different receptionist. This time, cancel the reservation and get your money back! This only works if the hotel has no record of your previous reservation.

#2 The Best Time to Book a Flight—A recent article on Huffington Post has researched the stats to find that [The Best Time to Book a Flight](#) is on average 54 days before take-off. This means that there is definitely an advantage in booking early—but not too early! You may want to hold out until prices have gone up and dropped down again just over 50 days before you go.

#3 Drive-Away Rental Car Deals—An amazing advantage to your road trip plans this year is a rental car drive-away deal. If you have always dreamed of seeing the vast countryside of America from east to west, this option makes it all possible! During these rental deal seasons, many companies relocate cars to popular destination areas to prepare for peak vacationers as needed. At this time, the rental car companies offer cheaper one-way rates. Some destinations include the northeast at the start of the summer, from Florida to Las Vegas, and from California to the east coast at the beginning and end of the summer.

#4 Buy at the Lowest Price—This hack may seem as simple as that—shop around before you dish out the cash or credit card for reservations. But when booking a vacation, sometimes we miss out on the best deals because we have no idea where to find them (and it all seems too much

effort!). When it comes to online websites like Orbitz, this travel booking platform is only used to sell tickets at the original wholesale price. On the other hand, websites like [Cheaptickets](#) buy large numbers of tickets to sell them to you at a much lower rate. Buying more is what allows them to sell to you for less.

#5 Avoid Being Turned Away—Even though you are absolutely sure you made that hotel or flight reservation, and you are absolutely certain you spelled your name correct when you booked it, that person behind the desk may inform you that you are incorrect. I've seen this happen numerous times (and for the most absurd reasons), but basically, if you have already made a reservation, print a copy of the receipt or e-ticket to avoid any hassles. People make mistakes, and your biggest advantage when this happens is having proof that you did certainly make the reservation. Also, make sure your ID always matches your ticket (even if you just changed your last name, it must match up at the gate).

#6 Book an E-ticket for Quick Check-in—Many first-time travelers miss out on the amazing advantage of booking an e-ticket, printing at home and using this confirmation number to save time with a self check-in. A self check-in is a great way to avoid the horrendous lines at the airport and to quickly move past the airline desk. It's always a good idea to also check-in with your flight number on the airline's website within 24 hours of take-off. At this time, many airlines also allow you to select your seat and upgrade (if you already haven't).

#7 Book Child-Friendly Vacations—One thing that parents sometimes fail to realize is that the hotel they booked is not the best place to bring children. It is a good idea to take note that places boasting “romantic getaway” or “popular hotel bar” do not cater to families. A great way to wage the kid-friendly atmosphere of a place is by searching on websites like [Trip Advisor](#) with a “family” search category or reading more information left by travelers on review websites.

#8 Keep the Airline Phone Number Handy—In case of a cancelled flight, it's always a great idea to write down the customer service number for each airline you plan to fly on your trip. That way, you can skip fighting for a new flight time in an endless line of equally disgruntled travelers if your flight gets cancelled. As someone who has hopped an airline too many times to count, it's a common occurrence that a flight is canceled due to weather or technical reasons. And you may have to wait an entire day for another flight! This option sure beats sleeping on the cold, concrete floor of the airport for a night—so keep your airline numbers handy in case this happens to you next vacation.

#9 Take Advantage of Roadside Assistance—If you plan to take a road trip this vacation, one amazing hack that can save you the misfortune of being stranded with your keys locked in the car or stuck on the side of the road with a flat tire is a call to request roadside assistance. Before you go, check with your insurance company to add a roadside assistance program for a ticket out of incredibly frustrating situations like this.



#10 Save Money for Being a Member—Are you a member of AAA, a rewards club or the US military? Hotels, flights, rentals and travel deals are often given to members of various organizations, but the most common are military and AAA discounts. Traveling is instantly made cheaper with a AAA discount. Before you set off this vacation, check with your local AAA office to request the guidebooks for the places you plan to go. When making reservations, always ask about AAA and military discounts, if these memberships apply to you. If not, you are missing out great opportunities to save during the start of the trip-planning process.

#11 Skip the Rental Insurance—Or don't! It really all depends on which type of auto insurance plan you already have for your personal vehicle. Sometimes, if you already make monthly payments on a complex, full-coverage plan, rental car insurance is completely unnecessary because it is already covered! Don't be the person who fails to check with your insurance company ahead of time. You are easy prey for the sales representatives that find ways to charge excessive fees to the desperate or uniformed at the rental car desk! To avoid the insurance, call your auto insurance company at the beginning of the trip-planning phase.

#12 Cut Corners with Family Package Deals—When you plan to travel with the whole family, there are numerous ways to stay on budget before you ever leave home. Travel prices for families are outrageous enough due to the number of people in the group. But, there are several ways to turn the family vacation into a success by sticking to the package deal that suit your needs most. Some families find that online vacation packages that include a rental car are the way to go, while others like to take advantage of meal cards at theme-parks to keep everyone from going hungry.

For Backpacking

#1 Prepare for Major Blisters—You may think you are quite the clever backpacker to purchase a new pair of boots just before the journey. Then you find out quite the opposite, when those same boots rub you raw the first day of the hike! Always train in the boots or shoes you plan to wear on the trip. Even if you've worn these shoes a thousand times, there is still a possibility you might get a blister from the long walk. Always pack band-aids—and slap a small piece of duct tape over them—if you have problems with them rubbing off.

#2 Think Duct Tape—Everyone knows that duct tape solves all humanity's problems. That is why you should have at least a small amount on you at all times when you are backpacking. Duct tape can be used to plug leaks, patch holes and pull ticks out of the skin.

#3 Study up on the Local Critters—Before you ever leave, it is a good idea to research dangerous wildlife or poisonous animals and insects of the region. Some travelers fail to realize they're not in Kansas anymore. Each area of the US has its own collection of hazards, so backpackers especially should always be aware. If you are seriously worried about ticks, a tick key may be the peace of mind you are seeking. Some people panic when they learn that if you don't remove a tick the proper way, part of the head will stay stuck right in the skin! A tick key will help solve this dilemma.

#4 Roll Your Clothes—Do not even think about folding that T-shirt in half. It's a waste of space, big time. For anyone trying to pull off travel with the lightest load (like a backpacking expedition), rolling your clothes is absolutely the way to go. The US military teaches this travel hack—and for a good reason! It helps you keep your clothes baggage to a minimum, so you have room for equipment and other necessary items for your journey.



#5 Prep for Building a Fire—After you make it to the campsite, it often becomes apparent after an hour of hearing your stomach grumble that you have no idea how to make a fire. To avoid this happening to you—or to make the fire-starting process much easier every time—pack the essential fire-starting tools in your backpack. You will need to use Shellac to waterproof your matches (just in case it rains), a Do-It-Yourself fire starter made from a cotton pad soaked in either Vaseline or wax or another model for cooking made from an egg carton filled with charcoal pieces.

#6 Mark your own Trail—Use biodegradable trail-marking tape to keep track of where you've been, where you go and everywhere else in between that interests you enough that you might possibly want to return. This also comes in handy when traveling in a group or with children, but many backpackers find it handy to make marks along the trail.

#7 Make Use of Plastic Canisters and Bags—If you bring anything special from home—like a mini first-aid kit or cooking spices—consider

using an old pill bottle, candy canister or small plastic bags to keep these things in order. You always want to keep your items to a minimum to lighten the load on your back for the long haul (anyone who's played an RPG would know that the adventurer can only carry so much weight!). Keep special items like this to a minimum to keep your backpack from weighing you down.

#8 Keep the Bugs Away—Rather than spraying yourself with a bottle of bug spray, use these hacks to keep the insects from eating you alive on your travels. First, it's always a good idea to set up your tent entrance facing the opposite direction of the wind to keep bugs from swarming nearby. Never leave food sitting out to keep from attracting insects and animals in to your sleep quarters. If you build a fire, bring a bundle of sage to burn and keep the gnats and mosquitoes away. Some brands of dryer sheets are also known to deter insects.

#9 Flashlight + Water Jug= Lantern—While you were feeling unfortunate for not being able to document your travels in the dark of night without a lantern (which is too heavy to carry with you), someone other backpacker decided to strap their cellphone to a water jug and made their own! Be sure to take advantage of this hack by carrying a clear plastic water bottle and flashlight, cell phone or GPS screen and something to tie it all together for a make-shift lantern.

#10 If you Must Pick Up your Poo—There is no need to worry about what to do with your poo this expedition. One of the best ways to keep the thought away from dreaded bathroom breaks is by carrying a little bit of baking soda along to neutralize the odor. Just sprinkle a bit on there—and don't worry too much about it, you'll get used to it!

#11 Equip the Essentials—Never underestimate the ability to strap items to your backpack (packing capabilities and comfort are usually the two main factors when choosing the right backpack). Just don't over-do it, and

weigh yourself down! You will only be needing the bare minimum, when you backpack. Clip metal eating utensils, wrap a small bit of duct tape and fasten your rolled up sleeping cushion to the back before you hit the road.

#12 Tea-light Shell + Alcohol + Aluminum Can= Camp Stove—This hack is one used by master trekkers and backpackers alike who have found the most ingenious way to save space. Who knew that this handy little stove was powerful enough to boil water? Many backpackers include an alcohol stove in their pack in order to keep the load light.



#13 Pack a Compass—Maps are no good unless you have a sense of direction, and you don't want to get lost when you are all alone! You would be amazed how easy it is to find your way when you have both a map and a compass. With both, you will always know if you have gone off track judging by the landmarks on the map and which way the compass points. If

you plan to see many sights or attractions in one day—whether you are trekking the deep forest or the big city—a compass is a fantastic tool to keep you stepping in the right direction.

#14 Memorize the Night Sky

—Among the most rewarding skills for a backpacker is the ability to identify objects in the night sky. Constellations and significant stars act as natural reference points for the four cardinal directions. To familiarize yourself with prominent constellations and stars helps you keep on track without having to glance down at the compass when it's too dark to see at night.



#15 Keep things Fresh with a Dryer Sheet—Just because you plan to live like a nomad this vacation, doesn't mean you have to smell like one! It's a good idea to insert a dryer sheet inside the bottom of your pack to keep clothes fresh.

For the Kids

#1 Optimize Space with a Behind-the-Seat Organizer—If you are packing up the family this vacation for a long car ride, be sure to do everything you can to keep games, toys, blankets, luggage, pillows and excessive junk to a minimum. A great way to allow the kids to bring their favorite games without taking up all the extra space is by strapping a shoe caddy to the back of the seat. This easy organizer gives kids rows of pockets for snacks, games and activities to keep them entertained on the long car ride.

#2 Do Go with the Fancy Baby Carrier—Invest in a BabyBjorn type carrier if you are going to be walking around the beach or other uneven areas where a stroller is less than ideal. It's also smart to stick with a good brand. In this case, the high end model will often provide the most comfortable and durable carrier—but it's always a great idea to shop around.

#3 Pack, Empty, then Repack Half—One of the best lessons learned on my own personal travels was the power of traveling light. Trust a seasoned traveler when they say—pack everything you need, dump it out then pack half of what you set aside before. If families live by this rule, it becomes much easier to usher around everyone's luggage when it transforms from a fleet of baggage into a manageable-sized bag capable of being carried by whoever's belongings are inside.

You will be surprised after you use this hack, and your kids are now able to carry their own luggage, since it no longer weighs a ton! Packing light also leaves room for lots of souvenirs and fun additions you are sure to pick up along the way.

#4 Check Strollers at the Gate—If your kid falls asleep in the stroller when you are standing in the baggage check-in line, there's no need to



force them out of the stroller just so it can be loaded on the plane. Just let your child enjoy a quick nap before a long day of flying, and check the stroller at the gate when your plane is boarding. Flight attendants sometimes allow families with children to board first. At this time, some at the gate is there to assist anyone who needs to check s carseat, stroller or other luggage while boarding before take-off.

#5 Let Kids Play Before the Flight—Just when you thought a day at the airport with kids would add a few strands to that new grey hair-do you've been working on for a few years now, the designated play area comes to the rescue! Who knew many of the airports in the United States provide a place for kids to play right inside the terminal. This is the perfect fun, free and easy way to pass the time before your flight. Check your flight information to see which gate your plane will be leaving from to see if you can add a stop to the play area onto your next visit to the airport. Major airports like Chicago O'Hare, Sea-Tac, Minneapolis/St. Paul International,

Dallas/Fort Worth International, Logan Airport and Las Vegas Mc Carren all include designated play areas.

#6 Plan for a Mom and Dad Evening Out—You may be that family that waits until you are already at the theme park to find an opportunity to take the night off from parental duties. It's possible to have a little vacation time alone with an evening along the Disney Boardwalk. And it's easiest to pull this off, if you plan ahead. There are babysitters available at theme parks, or you may have an older child who is willing to hold down the fort back at the hotel.

Many parents don't plan to venture out alone, because they don't see how there will be any breaks in between family fun. But, when my family went to Universal, there was a day when younger sibling was so worn out from spending the entire day at the park, the hotel room was more appealing than to go on any further. My parents were able to spend the rest of the evening out guilt-free for abandoning their parental duties in an even exchange just a few short hours that vacation.



#7 Take Advantage of Mobile Ticket Apps—If you ever find yourself standing in a long line at Disneyland—don't! Get out your smartphone, search for the Disneyland Mobile Ticket Store, and purchase your ticket—right then and there. There's no need to wait in line with this travel hack. Just scan the barcode provided on the mobile device, and you are ready to walk through the entrance.

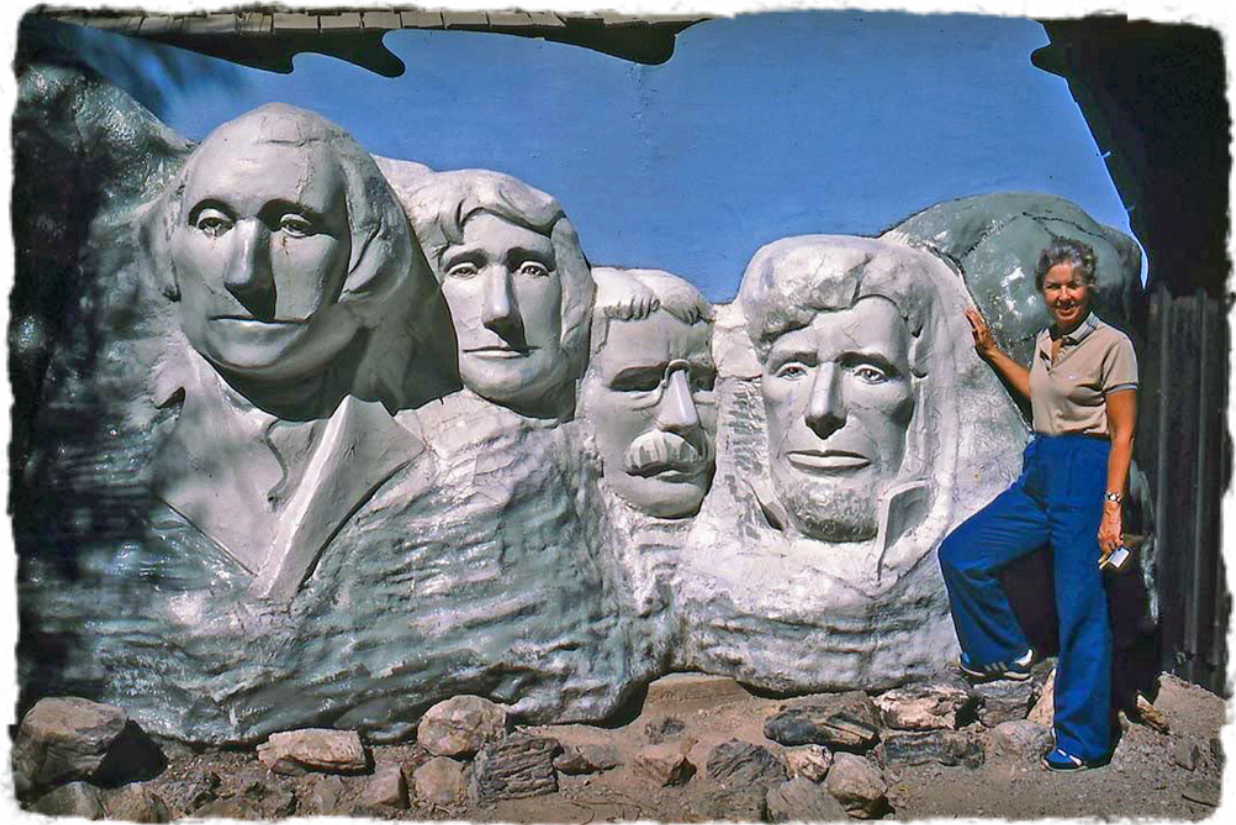
#8 Track Line Wait Times with Theme Park Apps—One of the best ways to keep a day with the family on track is by making note of the wait times for rides around the park. The [Disney World Wait Time](#) app provides you a chart of actual wait times, which includes the FastPass lines. Other apps also provide a nice overview of menus and prices around the park. If you have a map, you can plan the optimal path for your day by getting to the rides when there are less people in line. If wait times are fairly high, it might be a better option to stop and grab something to eat before the next chapter of the adventure.

#9 Visit Disneyworld, Disneyland or Universal an Hour Early—If your vacation includes a three-day pass and stay within a hotel at one of these prized theme parks found in the US, take advantage of this travel hack. You may find it interesting to note that when you book a stay at any of the hotels on site, you receive an invitation to enter the park one hour before the general public. This means you get an exclusive early bird entrance to put the family at the front of the line at the most popular rides in the park.

#10 Reserve Tickets for Top Attractions in Advance—If your family plans to do a bit a sightseeing popular attractions this vacation, do your best to book these tickets in advance to keep on track and out of the long lines at landmark sites. This is a great travel hack for anyone traveling during peak season or midsummer, when half the town is out on vacation.

#11 Set Aside Time for Dinner—If you want to play it smart this vacation, plan your meals by picking out some restaurants to try before you go. Be

sure to write down the phone number to each restaurant, and call ahead a few hours in advance at lunch or dinnertime to reserve a table. Making reservations allows you to be certain you stick to the schedule and meet the time demands of travel in between sights and destinations.



For the Weather

#1 Don't Go During the Storm Season—This may seem like a no-brainer to the local community, but to an outsider—how is one to know? One minute the vacation seems the most picture perfect memory, turned giant waves and dark cloudy skies in an instant by the incoming tides of the storm. It's best not to book travel during tornado, hurricane or any kind of storm season, unless you are ready to be swept up in the full effects of mother nature. It's sometimes not worth the risk—especially with young kids.

One year, my grandparents took us to Virginia Beach for a week. We were blessed with some of the worst beach weather we had ever seen. The guards called everyone out of water, the tides were rough and the waves way too high. It rained, it was cold and the sun only shined for us only on one day—it was the same day my grandma accidentally sprained her ankle. We called it, “The Vacation from Hell.”

#2 Go Ahead and Pack a Poncho—If your vacation brings you to any destination in the US that has ever seen a drop of rain, it is a good idea to pack a plastic poncho. These things are cheap at the dollar store, so pick up one for each person before you leave.

You don't want to do what my family did and fail to plan for rain. We made it to Orlando, and the skies opened up on the second day we were inside the theme parks. We searched all around the area for cheap ponchos that night, but all the local stores were sold out. Everyone else had made it there before us, and it took a few stops before we were able to find a reasonable bargain. Pack a poncho—lesson learned. They are lightweight, cheap and save you from getting soaked in the downpour.

#3 Rainproof your Backpack—If there's even the possibility that it might rain during your travels, take the time to make sure your backpack is rain

proof. You don't want any valuables or electronics to be ruined from the water. One way to avoid this problem is to line your backpack with a garbage bag for little extra rain-proofing peace of mind.

#4 Keep Valuables in Plastic—If you are going to take it out of your backpack at any time, anything electronic or valuable should have its own designated bag. That way if it begins to rain, stashing items or continuing to use them (like if you need your gps device for directions) becomes a much easier task, and you have already sealed these to keep from getting wet. Another option is to pick up a rain cover from the dollar store for larger items and bags.

#5 Invest in a Rain Jacket—If you know the weather at your destination calls for rain, you can get smart and pack waterproof rain jacket. It's not everyday a travel hack leaves you feeling like your own personal Batman. That's right—you were smart enough to save yourself from disaster. Yesterday, you decided to pick up a rain jacket before the trip, and today you are warm, cozy and content on your rainy walk around the city.



#6 Don't Wear Cotton Clothing—When your main focus is staying warm and avoiding moisture, cotton clothing is the first thing to go. Cotton is a troublesome material for the rainy weather, since it retains moisture and sweat. It is also a poor insulator for the cold weather.

#7 Get Fancy with a Travel Scarf—A scarf is among the most handy travelers tools in existence. That is because it is a versatile accessory that allows you to relax, stay warm and drift off for a nice catnap on the bus or airplane. A scarf can be used instead of a neck pillow—and it actually works much better in my opinion! It can be worn, so no need to carry it with you, and you can always remove it when you get too warm.

#8 Master the Art of Layering—When it comes to my all time favorite travel tips, my number one has to be the proper way to layer clothing. If you plan to cover a lot of ground this vacation, it may be a good idea to pack a nice bunch of various tanks, T's and long sleeve shirts made from thin, flowing materials that easily layer. Stick with versatile pieces and items that go with many of your outfits, so you are able to mix and match. The art of layering travel hack will keep you warm, cold or from frying in the sun, if you execute it properly.

#9 Keep your TP in a Can—A Folgers can to be exact! The large plastic Folgers coffee cans make a great TP holder for camp adventures. Most campers neglect to think about how quickly toilet paper disintegrates in the rain. If you want to make it to the campsite and back a few times in the rain, you are going to have to make yourself one of these plastic TP holders. Just run a rope through a hole in the center of the lid and base for a nice handle.

#10 Purchase Weather Essentials in Advance—Before you ever leave the house, it's a great idea to write out a quick list of essential items you might need for the weather. If you are traveling with a family, weather

needs can become even more complicated. It's always better to pick up sunscreen, umbrellas and hats from local stores to save money. These items are priciest where you desperately need them the most—like the beach, where you are headed this vacation.

#11 Use Newspaper to Dry the Inside of Boots—Your feet your your most valuable asset when you are backpacking across the country. You will find yourself walking everywhere, so your boots or shoes should always be prepped and ready to go each morning. To get the water out of shoes and boots, pack a few sheets of newspaper at the bottom of your pack to stuff inside wet shoes at night (be sure to change out the newspaper ever half-hour or when needed so that they dry by the time the sun rises. If your shoes or boots smell, just insert a dry tea bag inside to get things under control.

#12 Bring the Correct Footwear for a Trek—Just because you are about to embark on one of the longest hikes in Spain—The Camino—does not mean you should pack boots! In the beginning, it may seem like a good idea to pack boots, but a few days in, you will find the heat smothering the soles of your feet! For some treks across America, all you need is a good pair of tennis shoes.



For Travel Savings

#1 Adopt a Daily Travel Budget—Before you ever leave the house, be sure to total up your travel finds and estimate an average daily spending amount to keep you from running out of money this vacation. If you know how much you have, and you take note of how much you spend each day, you will be able to assure you are keeping on budget without tightening up your funds too much. It's also a great idea to spend a little less than your daily average to splurge on higher priced souvenirs at the end of your trip. If you have trouble keeping a hold of your budget, try splitting daily funds up into separate envelopes or stashes in your bag labeled with the date.

#2 Be Glad Your Kids are 12 and Under—These days, being a kid 12 and under is obviously in vogue. That is because various hotels, cruises, restaurants and attractions favor any kid who has not yet passed into the age of a teenager. So parents, it's a good idea to take advantage the deals your kids receive, while the offers last!

#3 Stick with Lunch and Happy Hour Deals—When you want to save a buck on food this vacation, just stick with large lunches (often priced lower than dinner) and enjoy the discounts offered during happy hour. This not only helps to save you money, but also the time it takes to wait on a dinnertime table at the same time when everyone else is eager to take a seat.

#4 Secure a Housesitting Assignment—Instead of seeking traditional accommodation like a hotel or B&B, why not try to save all that money by housesitting for local at your vacation destination. You will not only have an entire house to roam rather than a measly hotel room, you will also get it for free! There's no need to book two weeks at a hotel in California—just pay for membership and post your housesitting resume to websites like [TrustedHousesitters](#) to try out this travel hack, and see for yourself!

#5 WWOOFing, Willing Workers on Organic Farms—This organization is one that connects travelers to organic farms in need of labor. In exchange for offering your services for a short while, these farms provide you a place to eat for free and stay the night. Although most WOOFers don't stick around in one place for too long, this travel hack is an amazing experience that allows you to not only earn free accommodation—and you also get to see the live inner-workings of an organic farm!



#6 Ask for Free Samples—At the time when you first decide to go on a trip, send a letter to your favorite soap or shampoo companies to get free mini samples before you go. There's no need to waste your money on the plastic mini-bottles found at Walmart, when you can get them for free with just a little effort. Mini-samples are a great way to save both money and space on your next journey. Be sure to snag a few of those little cups of

honey from restaurants to give you a little energy boost later, if you find yourself hiking along the trails.

#7 Optimize Finances with a Greyhound—The Greyhound Discovery Pass is an amazing 60 consecutive day rail pass that gives you access to travel on any greyhound within the US and Canada. Other types of discounted bus-fare can be booked with a greyhound for travel throughout America on websites like [Megabus](#) and [Boltbus](#). One of the top tips to keep in mind when hacking the Greyhound travel prices is to book Monday through Thursday—that's when bus travel is cheapest.

#8 Utilize Tools to Get the Lowest Ticket Prices—[Bing Travel](#) is a handy tool that allows you to pull up the search results for plane ticket prices. What makes this feature of Bing so unique is the built-in estimation and forecast for the rise and fall of future ticket prices. Using this tool, travelers can choose the best time to make a plane ticket purchase by taking advantage of dropping prices.

#9 Pack with a Rum Runner's Flask—One of the benefits of bringing your alcohol is—you don't have to pay an arm and a leg for it! The only problem is that climbing onboard the cruise ship with your own alcohol is highly frowned upon. They will take it away! So to avoid this from happening, you



are going to have to start thinking more like a pirate. It's still not illegal, so just be sure to pick up a Rum Runner's flask to store your alcohol in your luggage. The special flask keeps the alcohol from being detected.

#10 Combine Admission Expenses—If you plan to see all the most popular sights of a city, then you will be happy to know you can save big by simply combining these attractions into one master ticket. Most cities in the US offer a City Pass that will take you to landmark attractions, museums and galleries can all be combined on one golden ticket. Instead of paying full price at each museum and major attraction you visit, you can just save yourself half the cost!

#11 Bid Smart on Hotels and Airfare—One of the best ways to get the lowest prices on hotels and airline tickets is by first signing up for deals and discount alerts on your favorite travel booking website. Both Hotwire and Priceline are great places to gauge what sort of price you should be paying for hotel stay. Just do a little bit of research before you make a purchase by comparing prices for recent winning bids.

#12 Side-Step Airline Hub Cities—If you plan to fly a major airline in the location of its hub city, you might find that the ticket prices are steeper than usual. That is because these routes are often the most popular selling tickets with frequent seats filled. To avoid being stuck with the extra cost for hub-city airfare, try booking a connecting flight to a nearby city. Instead of actually boarding this additional flight, finish the journey at the hub city as originally planned. This idea can save you money, but it only works if you fly one way!

Take note, if you don't show up for your connecting flight, the airline cancels your return flight. Also, you might want to be certain you haven't checked any bags before giving this hack a try.

For Free Trip Rewards

#1 Achieve Elite Flyer Status—Some of the top travel hackers succeed by unlocking amazing rewards through frequent flyer programs. When these expert travelers push the borders of an elite status with one of the airline membership programs, they often do a “mileage run” to obtain elite status with frequent flyer miles. If you find yourself coming up close to an a higher membership status, it may be worth doing a mileage run. To rack up the points, wait until airlines compete with price war or open up a new flight that boasts triple the miles for the most effective, one-time run.

#2 Start Earning Free Flights and Airline Miles—Many people fail to realize that earning airline miles and points on rewards cards is a cinch. The only thing you have to do is be prompt about paying your card each month. If you replace cash with a rewards card of your choice, you can combine all expenses from groceries, bills and day to day expenses onto a rewards card, and pay it off each month. This allows you to rack up an amazing number of points to be used as airline miles.

There are websites out there like [Milecards.com](https://www.milecards.com) that will help you figure out the best rewards cards for your spending budget and needs. Many of the rewards cards out there also allow you the options to consolidate or exchange airline miles and rewards points you already have in your various accounts to be used toward one reward—such as an airline ticket.

#3 Get your Bags Checked for Free—One of the benefits of a travel rewards card—such as airline branded club cards like United or Delta—is the ability to get free checked bags, when you purchase flights with your credit card. Each travel rewards card is different, but many of them offer you various types of baggage discounts that allow you to simply set down your bags and walk away without any fees! It also pays to be a member of the airline club. This is also another way to get your bags checked for free.

#4 Unlock Free Airport Lounge Access—Another amazing benefit of choosing the right travel rewards credit card is the ability to step inside the airport lounges in between flights. Most of the time, you must pay to be a member or earn this reward as a frequent flyer to enjoy the perks of the airline club. Things like free wifi, drinks and food can often be found on the other side of the lounge doors. If it is airport lounge access you seek, then there are many travel rewards cards out there that will help unlock the key to entrance of various airline clubs.



#5 Take the AA Challenge—American Airlines is quite hush, hush about the AA Challenge. If you fly American Airlines often—especially if you are taking long trips—it might be a good idea to know about all the bonus points you could be earning on your travels. Call in and ask a customer service about the AA Challenge. This program allows you to pay \$300 to participate, and if you accumulate 10,000 points over the course of three

months, you achieve a year of platinum status. This means a year of business class upgrades and lounge access!

#6 Go for a Hotel Branded Rewards Card—If you are more concerned about covering the cost of accommodation—since you travel more on land than in the sky—you may find that a hotel branded rewards card is a great option for you. The only difference between hotel branded cards and those used by the airlines is that it is more difficult to find extravagant deals (though many hotel cards also have sign-up bonuses), and your rewards points translate at a lower price value.

Regardless, if you travel to the same chain for business or vacation, it may be a good idea to invest in a hotel branded card for free accommodation, room upgrades and spa credits.

#7 Choose an Airline Branded Credit Card—There are many advantages to settling with just one airline and enjoying all the perks offered by frequent flyer status. If you have a favorite airline, sign up to start totaling up your miles now, and set a goal. Many airline branded cards will allow you upgrades on things like seating, a free bag, lounge access and rewards flights for your miles.

#8 Sign-up for High Point Bonuses—One of the best ways to get an instant free flight is by signing up for a card with a high spending bonus. Many rewards cards offer anywhere from 10,000 to 30,000 points in rewards after spending so much money over the course of three months. For 10,000 points the spending would be around \$350 each month, or just a total of \$1000 at the end of three months. After you meet the minimum requirements, you can get rewards that translate from 30,000 points to \$300 for your next airline ticket—a free, domestic round-trip ticket.

#9 Open up Multiple Cards, then Close Them—A trap you might fall into when opening up a rewards card is remembering to close it before you are

hit with the annual fee! There are ways around paying the annual fee for a credit card, but it is good to do your research for the particular rewards card you use to work out a fool-proof plan. Many travel hackers open many rewards cards at a time in order to rack up the points with the highest one-time bonuses. Execute this hack with caution by starting small!

#10 Go with a Gas Rewards Card—If your travels take you wherever the road goes, it may be a good idea to skip the airline rewards cards and go with something more auto-friendly. Some gas rewards cards allow you to earn up to 5 points per \$1 spent—which is an amazing points return rate! When planning a road trip or family car ride next vacation, check out the rates on gas rewards cards, and you might be able to get your hotel stay free.