

The Intelligent Traveler

TIPS AND TRICKS TO HELP YOU TRAVEL SMARTER

Edited by SARAH BRUNING

Your Travel Master Plan for 2020

Sick of making the same tired (albeit well-intentioned) resolutions? We've settled on a short list of goals that can help make you a savvy, more confident traveler—no matter where you roam in the year ahead.

Traveling solo this year? Learn exactly how to plan for a health emergency on page 88.

Turn Your Kids into True Global Citizens

There's no better teacher than experience, which is why we asked three travel advisors from T+L's A-List to share new ideas for immersive, child-friendly trips the whole family will embrace. **BY TANVI CHHEDA**



In Peru, kids can learn how this bridge is rebuilt annually using Incan rope-weaving techniques.

A MEGA-FAN OF historical fiction, my nine-year-old daughter, Diya, was devouring a book about Betsy Ross when a thought occurred to me: If she is this enraptured by words on a page, why not show her where the famed flag maker actually lived in Philadelphia? Over a long weekend, we could tour Betsy Ross's home, visit the Museum of the American Revolution, and see the Liberty Bell.

As Diya moves into her upper elementary years, I'm increasingly aware of the value of connecting our travels with her education. And given the turbulent political climate, it feels especially important to introduce her to the founding ideals of freedom and equality early on. By taking her to places central to our democracy, I'm not only stoking her natural interests but, I hope, helping her understand her own responsibility to uphold those values as she grows older.

I'm certainly not alone in this quest. Travel advisors report that more parents are asking for creative itineraries that immerse their families in modern culture, while also providing important context for the history children are learning in class. While it can be tricky to balance those things in a way all ages will enjoy, the key is starting with the right destination for your crew.

AGES 6 TO 10: PERU

International days are now becoming common in elementary schools. Playing off that, Global Community founder **Keith Waldon** (kwaldon@departurelounge.com; 512-750-1012) suggests the company's Peru EcoCamp itinerary (seven days from \$3,532 per person) because it delves into local culture and nature—perfect for this age group. Highlights include viewing Andean condors, meeting a Quechua family, and participating in a traditional dinner.

AGES 9 TO 12: IRELAND

Kids in this range can begin to appreciate interactive museums and in-depth tours. **Jessica Griscavage** (jessica@mccabeworld.com; 703-762-5056) builds trips that incorporate Irish history and activities such as falconry and fishing (eight days from \$5,000 per person). Start in Dublin with the *Jeanie Johnston*, the replica of a tall ship boarded by citizens fleeing the Great Famine. Then head to Bunratty Castle in County Kerry to learn about 19th-century village life.

AGES 13 TO 17: CHINA

Parents of teens often ask for trips that reinforce high-school language classes, which increasingly include Mandarin. To complement that learning, **Guy Rubin** (guy@imperialtours.net; 86-108-440-7162) might arrange a behind-the-scenes visit to Chengdu Panda Base or a lesson with a kung fu master (13 days from \$36,800 for a family of four). The common thread: exposing kids to the culture in ways that help them find connections between life in China and their own back home.

T+L EDITOR GOAL

“My parents are nearing retirement, so I’m trying to coax them into discovering new destinations. Thus far, I’ve talked my mom into booking an e-bike trip to Spain this summer.”

— SIOBHAN REID, ASSOCIATE EDITOR



Get the Right Credit Card for Your Travel M.O.

With launches from Hilton and Marriott and revamps to heavy hitters like the American Express Platinum card, you'll want to evaluate whether you have the best spending tools in your arsenal. **BY ERIC ROSEN**

FOR DILIGENT POINTS HACKERS: CHASE SAPPHIRE RESERVE

The Reserve card earns three points per dollar on dining and a wide range of travel purchases, including hotels, airfare, and even ride shares. It also provides Global Entry/TSA Precheck fee reimbursement and travel protections, including primary rental-car insurance. The best perk is how far those points go with the 1.5-cent redemption rate for purchases made through Chase Ultimate Rewards, which has 13 partners, including Southwest, United, and Hyatt. *chase.com; annual fee \$450.*

FOR SERIOUS FREQUENT FLIERS: AMERICAN EXPRESS PLATINUM CARD

Anyone who spends significant time in the air will appreciate money-saving benefits like a \$200 annual credit for airline incidentals and a Global Entry or TSA Precheck fee waiver. Cardholders can access Delta Sky Clubs, Priority Pass lounges, and Amex's growing network of Centurion Lounges. They also accrue five points per dollar on flights and can transfer the points to 19 airline partners, which include Delta. *americanexpress.com; annual fee \$550.*

FOR FOOD LOVERS: CITI PRESTIGE

Earning five points per dollar on restaurant transactions means travelers who primarily splurge

on meals will get the most out of this card. Other pluses: points can be transferred to 15 airline partners, which include JetBlue and Virgin Atlantic, and a fourth night is free on up to two hotel stays per year. *citi.com; annual fee \$495.*

FOR HOTEL-BRAND LOYALISTS: MARRIOTT BONVOY BRILLIANT OR HILTON HONORS ASPIRE

Travelers who stick to a single hotel chain should choose one of these two options from American Express. The Bonvoy Brilliant makes stockpiling Marriott points easy, with sign-up bonuses as high as 75,000 points. Members get six points per dollar at more than 7,000 hotels and three on airfare and U.S. restaurants. They can also count on \$300 each year in statement credits toward Marriott purchases, plus an annual free night worth up to 50,000 points.

For those who prefer Hilton brands, a 150,000-point sign-up bonus on the Aspire is just the start. Cardholders receive a free weekend night to use every year, plus \$250 in annual statement credits for Hilton Resorts purchases and airline incidentals. The card earns 14 points per dollar at Hilton hotels; seven on flights and car rentals and at restaurants in the U.S.; and three on everything else. *americanexpress.com; annual fee \$450 each.*



Before You Sign Up, Three Things to Know...

1 YOU CAN'T ALWAYS GET THE SIGN-UP BONUS.

When mergers happen (case in point: Marriott and Starwood), some branded cards may get discontinued altogether, while others may get a different name under the new company's program. Even if it's a new issuer taking over, you may not receive a sign-up bonus if you carried one of the old cards. Call customer service to confirm what you're eligible for.

2 BUSINESS AND PERSONAL CARDS MIGHT COUNT AGAINST EACH OTHER.

Capital One, for example, will only approve you for a new credit card once every six months, and this applies to both personal and business accounts. It also restricts the number of open Capital One personal credit cards in your wallet to two.

3 CARD FAMILIES MATTER.

Some Citi cards—notably Prestige, Premier, and Rewards+—have “family rules.” If you either received a sign-up bonus or closed any related accounts within the past 24 months, you won't be eligible to earn the bonus on a new card within this group. — E.R.

T+L EDITOR GOAL

“I'm packing healthy snacks in my carry-on so I can resist the \$8 bags of Oreo Minis and other overpriced treats at the airport.” — *MADLINE BILIS, ASSISTANT EDITOR*



Do Your Part to Fight Overtourism

It's time to stop burying our heads in the sand and reconcile our passion for travel with the damage too many visitors can cause. **BY SOPHY ROBERTS**

WHEN I STARTED as a travel writer 22 years ago, I didn't question articles like "50 Places to See Before You Die" or "How to Do Paris in a Day." Readers were traveling hard and often, as was I. Budget airlines were booming. Then Instagram took the concept of "fast travel" to another level—powered by ephemeral selfies that replaced meaningful experiences.

For the past eight years, travel and tourism's contribution to global GDP has increased annually by an average of 4.4 percent, according to Rochelle Turner, vice president of research for the World Travel & Tourism Council. While that revenue can be hugely beneficial to a nation's economy, there is a flip side: "Too much tourism at a certain time in a certain place in a certain context can damage the ecological, social, economic, psychological—even political—well-being of the destination," Turner told

me. Even hard-core expedition meccas like Mount Everest, where Sherpas removed 24,200 pounds of trash during a cleanup last year, are suffering. By 2017, more than double the UNESCO-recommended number of daily visitors were descending on Machu Picchu, prompting a rule that tourists need to arrive within 60 minutes of their ticketed time and limit their visit to four hours.

Like many travelers, I struggle with my role in the problem. When I took my youngest son to Venice in 2015, instead of getting lost in the city's mysteries as I had at age 17, we watched a cruise ship block out the sun. Venice now attracts around 70,000 visitors a day—on top of its population of roughly 261,000—according to estimates. Researchers at the city's Ca' Foscari University say that is some 24,000 more people than the infrastructure can cope with.

That experience convinced me to steer clear of the crowds, to write about places where there was more fear than footfall. Siberia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea—I took my kids to all of them, and started to find the strength of my convictions. If it made a "where to go" column (Dubrovnik, Croatia), I thought twice about taking the trip.

Is the next era of travel one in which popular experiences become more

costly, as a means to regulate visits? In July, Venice will introduce an "entrance fee" of up to \$11 for day-trippers. I'm not sure that's enough to put people off, given that it's roughly the same price as a negroni in St. Mark's Square.

The issue starts to feel irresolvable: as one solution emerges (promoting second-tier cities or briefly closing an at-risk site), the next wave of travelers comes in. China's outgoing tourism market alone is more than 14 times the size it was 20 years ago, and it's poised to grow exponentially as 417 million Chinese millennials come of age.

If the industry is asking more questions than it is giving answers, that's because one size doesn't fit all: stakeholders have to think specifically about the causes and effects of each problem. Bangkok's answer can't be Barcelona's. It's also a question of impact. Four hundred visitors who play by the rules can be less burdensome than the 40 who don't.

For now, how can industry pros help us be more responsible? Travel advisors can suss out less-frequented regions and provide singular access. "We suggest off-the-beaten-path destinations and arrange visits to sites otherwise closed to the public," says **Matteo Della Grazia** (matteo@discoveryouritaly.com; 347-441-3907), a Perugia-based Italy specialist on T+L's A-List. But we also shouldn't conflate privilege with a solution: long-term fixes need to go beyond paying more to beat the system.

Tyler Dillon, a specialist at Toronto trip planner Trufflepig, encourages viewing travel as an act of personal accountability. "It's about applying the same consciousness that society is finally giving to single-use plastics," he says. "If we're traveling just to get a break, most of us can get it closer to home than we think."

◀
Crowds line up with phones in hand to take pictures of the sunset on Santorini, Greece.



Have an Emergency Plan

No one wants to need medical help away from home, but knowing how to make smart decisions in an SOS situation and advocate for yourself can save time, money, stress—and maybe even your life. **BY KIERA CARTER**

DURING A VACATION TO Monterrey, Mexico, critical-care doctor Torben K. Becker was crossing the street when he got hit by a cab driver who was speeding down the wrong lane. Fortunately, he had researched local health care before his trip and knew exactly which privately run hospital he wanted to go to before the medics even arrived. That preparedness greatly improved the treatment he received: “Had I gone to the government hospital, a junior doctor would have operated on me, because specialists were only present in the morning,” he explains. Now Becker, an assistant professor in the emergency-medicine department at the University of Florida, explains how travelers can do their own due diligence before they set off.

CONDUCT THOROUGH RESEARCH IN ADVANCE.

No single source lists legit hospitals in every country, but U.S. and European embassy websites are good references. Another resource: **Patients Beyond Borders** (patientsbeyondborders.com), a medical-tourism consultancy that works with national health departments around the world to maintain a short list of facilities that meet standards of care.

In general, Becker recommends sticking with large private hospitals, as he did in Mexico. “Government hospitals in developing countries can have limited resources,” he says. A few solid options: Apollo Hospitals throughout India; Makati Medical Center in the

Philippines; and Netcare Group in South Africa.

Also, confirm which services are not covered abroad by your regular health insurance. Save your findings in a note on your phone.

PACK YOUR HIGHEST-LIMIT CREDIT CARD.

If you need surgery, some hospitals will make you pay in advance because they don't have the supplies on hand, Becker explains. It's also a good idea to make sure the card is paid off before a trip.

CONNECT WITH YOUR PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN.

Call your home doc ASAP to consult on the best course of care. Can't reach anyone because of a time difference? **Allianz** (allianztravelinsurance.com) and some other travel-insurance companies have U.S.-based 24/7 assistance lines you can call for help and guidance.

HAVE AN EXIT STRATEGY.

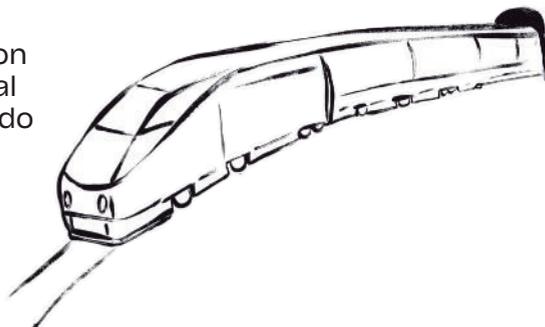
If you're headed to a place in which care options may be limited, invest in medical-evacuation insurance. “Make sure your plan includes transportation home, not just to the closest appropriate facility,” Becker says. **Medjet Assist** (medjetassist.com; \$99 for an eight-day trip) will fly you to the U.S. hospital of your choice.

◀ Before international travel, check if your insurance covers or reimburses prescription fees.



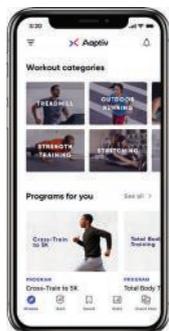
T+L EDITOR GOAL

“A lot of airlines are now giving passengers the option of purchasing carbon offsets for their flights. My goal for 2020 is to make a point of paying a little extra to do this—or even take a train instead of a plane if it's a viable option.” — JOHN WOGAN, SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR



Stay Fit (Really!) on the Road

Forget uninspiring stints on hotel treadmills. New on-demand fitness options enable travelers to sweat it out during sessions that cater to a range of ability levels and interests. T+L editors road tested apps that let you download routines in advance. Here, our three favorites.



AAPTIV

\$14.99/month;
Android, iOS

We loved the guided yoga flows and even found interval workouts that made the usually mind-numbing elliptical feel exciting. Users can sort sessions by duration, difficulty, and music genre, or browse curated collections. Travel-Friendly Fitness, for example, offers get-to-know-the-area runs, a meditation to ease travel anxiety, and a restorative 15-minute postflight stretch.

CHOOSE IT FOR

Coach-led audio workouts set to killer playlists.



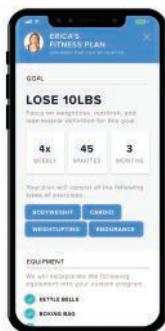
NEOU

\$14.99/month;
Android, iOS.

Exercisers who gravitate toward boutique classes can try out dozens of creative new concepts in high-intensity interval training, dance, boxing, and even some recovery and mobility work. We liked that the app's sort function gets pretty granular: it lets users narrow the selection to the equipment used and body parts they want to engage.

CHOOSE IT FOR

A video-driven boutique fitness experience.



TRAINIAC

\$49.99; iOS.

Within minutes of downloading this app, a personalized video greeting from our selected trainer popped into our feed. Once users submit their goals, the trainer sends custom workouts to their queue. If moves are too challenging or unclear, users can send back any feedback or questions. This data is then used to tweak future workouts. Users can also preview the sets and watch a GIF of each move before getting started.

CHOOSE IT FOR

One-on-one training with flexibility and accountability.

T+L EDITOR GOAL

"I'm determined to get my husband and two sons to stop using hotel toiletries and just rely on the ones I pack for them. It's an easy way for our family to become more sustainable travelers."

— DEVIN TRINEAU,
PHOTO EDITOR



T+L EDITOR GOAL

"I'm going to pick up trash on my vacation jogs, whether I'm in a city like Kiev or on a beach in Costa Rica. Every bit helps."

— SCOTT BAY,
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT