

# Guide on Getting Started with Solo Travel

by Sharon Tseung and Heesun Lee, founders of [MeWantTravel.com](http://MeWantTravel.com)

## Introduction

Sharon and Heesun here. First off - thank you so much for downloading this free e-book and checking out our blog, [Me Want Travel!](http://MeWantTravel.com) On Me Want Travel, we've been documenting our quest to visit 100 countries before 100, aiming to join the [Travelers' Century Club](http://Travelers' Century Club). We're both young professionals who enjoy traveling long term, and we want to encourage other young professionals to expand their horizons in the same way.

Solo travel can seem daunting. When we first embarked on our journeys, we had no clue what we were in for.

### **You might experience a few feelings before and during your trip:**

Fear - Going somewhere by yourself means it's up to you to find your way, make friends, and stay safe. It's a different experience from taking a short trip with a few friends.

Homesickness - After a few days in, you may start to feel homesick. When you're out of your comfort zone, the unfamiliar might scare/challenge you so much that you'll long for the convenience of home.

Loneliness - If you're used to being surrounded by your friends and family and people who speak the same language as you, you might feel lonely at first. A lot of times you'll travel to countries in where people don't speak your tongue, and it can feel isolating.

### **But throughout your travels, you may feel:**

More Capable - After you realize you can handle the world independently, you'll feel more confident in your abilities. Finding your way in countries that don't speak your language, protecting yourself from danger, and making friends with people you don't know, you'll understand that even in challenging situations you're competent enough to pull through. (We'll show you how to form friendships with locals and break down

language barriers later on in this e-book.)

More Cultured/Enlightened - An instrumental part of growth is putting yourself in challenging situations. We've learned so much while traveling independently, and we both agree that the biggest realization you'll encounter is the fact that we generally live in a bubble. Once you travel, you'll realize the smallness of your world and the amount of possibilities there are out there. You'll gain an understanding of different perspectives and cultures as you listen to the stories of the people you meet. And with solo travel, you're more susceptible to engross yourself in your surroundings because you'll have nothing else to do but to think, feel, and appreciate while you're by yourself.

More Inspired - After seeing the world in a different light, you'll likely be more inspired to take action. We find that the more we see out in the world, the more ideas we get and the more excited we are about life.

This is why we believe solo travel is so crucial. It's a chance to test your limits without depending on others and to open your eyes to new perspectives. If you want to see the world on your own agenda and fully immerse yourself in other cultures, we think solo travel is the way to go!

Of course, there are a lot of practical concerns like how to prepare your trip without breaking the bank. In this guide we'll cover some of these basics on how you can get started with solo travel. As always, you can refer to [mewantravel.com](http://mewantravel.com) as this guide is just a starting point - we'll be continually posting more specific information about each country so you can be more informed for your next trip!

## [How to Get Flights for Cheap](#)

In general, one of the biggest concerns around traveling is cost. People think that traveling requires massive amounts of money, but in reality there are many ways to do it affordably as long as you're doing it in a smart way. I've found that it is very possible to travel for under \$50/day by taking some time to find cheaper flights, places to stay, etc.





In this section we will show you a few secrets on how to snatch the cheapest flights, so you don't have to pay an arm and a leg for each of your trips.



From checking flight rates consistently for the past year, I've learned many secrets to finding the best deals. You may not think it's a huge deal to find the most affordable rates for flights, but when you think about all of the travel costs that add up, you'll realize the importance of being careful with your spending. Every penny counts! So without further ado, here are 8 secrets to finding the cheapest flights:

## Let Deals Plan Your Trips

There's the saying that you should buy what you need, not what you want. Travel though, is usually a luxury, something you don't exactly 'need'. So if you're going to go on these trips you might as well fly cheap and plan them according to flight prices. The great thing about solo travel is that you don't need to deliberate with friends to plan. So let the deals plan your trip instead. Pay attention to promotions and discounts and once there's an appealing deal, jump on it.

 <p><b>Air Canada – \$715: San Francisco – Seoul, South Korea. Roundtrip, including all Taxes</b></p> <p>A good sale to Seoul for Fall travel Sample Travel Date: November 9th –...</p> <p><b>02 Jul 2015</b></p>	 <p><b>American – \$627: San Francisco / Chicago / Washington D.C. / Newark / Cleveland – Sao Paulo, Brazil. Roundtrip, including all Taxes</b></p> <p>American is attacking United hubs (and Seattle) with fares to Sao Paulo Availability...</p> <p><b>01 Jul 2015</b></p>
 <p><b>[FARE GONE] American / US Airways – \$201: San Francisco / Newark / Houston / Denver / Cleveland – Cozumel, Mexico. Roundtrip, including all Taxes</b></p> <p>Like the Ixtapa / Zihuatanejo deal from earlier today, this deal to Cozumel...</p> <p><b>30 Jun 2015</b></p>	 <p><b>[FARE GONE] American / US Airways – \$215: Newark / San Francisco / Houston / Denver / Cleveland – Ixtapa / Zihuatanejo, Mexico. Roundtrip, including all Taxes</b></p> <p>Ixtapa / Zihuatanejo on sale usually goes for over \$600. While the price for...</p> <p><b>30 Jun 2015</b></p>

## Buy and Fly at the Right Time

If you're on some kind of time crunch and you can't let the deal take you, then make sure to buy your tickets at the right time and fly at the right time.

- Multiple sources state that [Sunday and Tuesday afternoon](#) are the best times to buy tickets.
- [Tuesday and Wednesday](#) are the cheapest days to fly.
- Based on 1.5 billion airfares, cheapair.com found that [booking 47 days in advance](#) is usually the sweet spot for cheapest airfare (Feb. 2015 report).
  - Personally, my rule is to not book too early or too late – but usually I swoop on flight deals so it doesn't really matter for me.

## Take Advantage of Google Flights

[Google Flights](#) is by far my FAVORITE tool for looking up flights. In fact it's one of the only tools I use when searching for prices. Reasons being:

- **Ability to search multiple airports:** Being from the bay area, I can fly out of three nearby airports (SFO, SJC, OAK). Google Flights allows you to select up to 5 origin airports to search for.
- **Easy-to-use fare calendar:** Once you search for flights, Google will provide a calendar of fares for you so you can easily compare flight prices. For example, if you enter a round trip search with 3 days in between, the fare calendar will base off of this and show you fares for each day. Other flight aggregators (for example [kayak.com](#) and [orbitz.com](#)) make it hard to compare prices for different days.
- **Includes most airlines:** Google Flights even includes cheap domestic airlines like JetBlue, Virgin America, and RyanAir. The only airline I've noticed that's left out is Southwest Airlines (so make sure to check their rates when you're doing your flight shopping). I've also found that a lot of the extreme flight deals you randomly come across are normally included on Google Flights as well.
- **Simple Interface:** Google Flights is very clean and simple, unlike many other flight aggregators!

The screenshot displays the Google Flights search interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Round trip', 'One way', and 'Multi-city', with 'Round trip' selected. The search parameters are set to 'Barcelona (all airports)' and 'Milan (all airports)'. The departure date is 'Fri, July 17'. Below the search bar, there are filters for 'Stops', 'Price', 'Airline', 'Trains', 'Times', and 'More'. A blue button labeled 'Choose a flight' is prominent, with the text 'Sort by price + best'. Below this, the price is shown as '\$26 one way'. A tip indicates: 'You found the best price within +/-3 days! We've checked nearby dates and cannot find a cheaper fare'. The 'Best flights' section lists three options: Ryanair for \$26, easyJet for \$46, and Vueling/British Airways/Iberia for \$48. To the right, a calendar view shows the price for each day in July and August, with July 17th highlighted as the best price. A bar chart at the bottom of the calendar shows the price trend over time.

## Check One-Way Flights

Sometimes you can find better deals by searching one way flights rather than round trip flights, reason being that round trip searches do NOT include different airlines for the flight

there and flight back. Here is a strategy I like to use with Google Flights: open up two browsers and search one way flights for each way. Occasionally, the cheapest flights will be from two different airlines going each way and you'll grab a deal that's better than a roundtrip flight.

## Monitor Deal Sites

My favorite deal sites are [theflightdeal.com](http://theflightdeal.com) and [thepointsguy.com](http://thepointsguy.com). They're both very clear and concise so you can digest the information easily. I normally stick with The Flight Deal but I've noticed The Points Guy will occasionally post offers I hadn't noticed before.

## Follow These Twitter Users

To stay even more on top of flight deals, follow these Twitter Users:

@airfarewatchdog

@theflightdeal

@thepointsguy

These accounts are constantly posting deals like this:



*And of course, follow us on Twitter as well (@MeWantTravel) as we'll be continuously updating you guys on specific information with each country.*



## Stay Aware of the Cheapest Airports

Sometimes it's cheaper to fly to certain countries within the same continent of where you're going, and travel country to country within that continent. For example, RyanAir is a cheap airline that allows you to fly within Europe usually around \$15-50 per trip. If you were flying to Europe, it may be beneficial to fly into a 'cheaper' airport like [Malpensa Airport in Milan, Italy](#) and then RyanAir it to your destination. Here's an example of the [cheapest European airports](#) to fly into.

## Become a Master Travel Hacker

Travel hacking is basically the art of collecting and spending frequent flyer miles and points for free travel. If you sign up for loyalty programs and specific credit cards you can obtain a lot of free flights (and hotel stays). Through this method, I've been able to acquire a handful of free Hong Kong flights. The Points Guy has a great [beginner's guide](#) on getting started with travel hacking.

## Packing

That moment of excitement hits when you realize that you're about to travel across the globe to foreign countries, experience their cultures, eat their amazing food, and explore. But then it starts to dawn on you, what do you pack?

## Necessities

**Before you pack your suitcase/backpack, make sure you've covered these necessities:**

- Scan and email a picture of your passport and driver's license to yourself. Most likely you will be completely fine, but just in case you find yourself in a situation without identification, you want to be able to access these!
- Inform your cellular company know that you're traveling and disable your minutes and data. That way you won't be charged for roaming and you won't be paying for minutes that you're not using.
- Notify your credit card companies that you're traveling abroad is also a good way to avoid getting your credit card annoyingly blocked just as you're about to scoop up some gorgeous dresses during the insane summer sales in Spain or pay for that ATV to explore the beaches in Mykonos, Greece.

- Plan an itinerary before you leave so you can make sure you hit all the spots you want to see! It's easy to get overwhelmed with all of the cities, make sure you don't miss anything by checking out [this itinerary](#).

## General Packing List

I used to love packing for trips as a kid but as I've gotten older, I just want to pack as fast as possible and not think about it. Let us take out the guesswork for you and ensure that you've packed everything with our packing list. This packing list is intended for hot weather since that's when most people tend to travel, but feel free to adapt it as necessary and remember to bring those boots and coats if you're traveling during the colder months.

- Suitcase or backpack
- Passport
- Phone + charger
- Headphones
- Universal charger like this one [here](#)
- Earplugs
- Sunglasses
- Watch
- Lotion
- Sunscreen
- Toothbrush
- Visa approval letters (depending on the country) and passport photos if necessary
- Tanks
- Shorts or pants
- Underwear
- Socks
- Bathing suit/swim trunks
- Day backpack
- 1 pair of sandals
- 1 pair of sneakers
- Medicine (Tums, Advil, etc.)
- Toiletries like shampoo and conditioner
- Chapstick
- Hand sanitizer

### **For women, you might also want to consider:**

- Makeup and makeup remover
- Razor
- Hairbrush
- Hair ties



- Bras
- Pads/Tampons
- Leggings
- Heels for going out

## How to Make Friends

Traveling alone to a new place, whether it's a new state or a new country, can be scary. There's the fear of not speaking the language, not knowing anyone, or not being familiar with the culture, but don't let this deter you! That's completely normal and to be expected. We've compiled a list of ways you can get better acquainted to your surroundings and start meeting people.

### Choose Your Housing Wisely



As a solo traveler, one of my goals was to make friends along the way so I could have someone to share the experience with. In order to maximize the chance of meeting people, I chose to book hostels that had a reputation for mingling, group activities, and a bar. I met a

lot of people in Europe through the hostel bar and from there, we would explore the city and then sometimes meet up the next day to continue traveling.

Along that same vein, if you're looking for a more relaxed vibe, there are bed and breakfasts and hostels that cater to specific clients. If you're looking for a spiritual getaway, going to a [yoga retreat](#) is a potential option. Thinking about what you want in advance can help you connect with people who have similar goals for their vacation as you do.

## Go On Group Tours

Tours were another great way to meet folks from all over the world. [Sandeman Tours](#) was great for this as the guides are young, knowledgeable and the tours are free (tipping is highly recommended though). You can usually spot their red tour guide pamphlets at the local ubiquitous Starbucks and they're active in most popular tourist destinations such as Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, and New York.

## Tinder

Tinder gets a lot of flack for being a hook-up tool, but it's evolved to be so much more than that (and still that). It allows you to connect with other expats and locals who know the area and if you're not really feeling the vibe, there's no pressure to meet up with them. At the very least, you can ask them for tips on what to do. It's pretty risk-free and doesn't require that much time or cost anything to use. If you don't have the app already, you can find it [here](#) for iPhones and [here](#) for Android phones.

## Get Involved with the Community

The following suggestions might be applicable for those who are going to be in the country or state a little longer. When I first moved to Florida for a summer internship, I knew absolutely no one. While it was scary at first and my friends can attest to the fact that I hated it and declared, "this place sucks," I grew to appreciate its quirks and the natural beauty it has to offer.

The first way I got more involved was to:

## Attend Yelp Events

I'm lucky enough to be Yelp Elite so it comes with cool perks like free food! Disclaimer: that was probably one of the top motivators for becoming Elite and after getting Elite status, I can tell you that it was completely worth it.

Our first one was at Longhorn Steakhouse, where we learned about the different cuts of steak (there are a lot) and the best temperatures to grill them at. I also got to meet a lot of fellow foodies and one of them even turned out to know one of my coworkers! This could be a good way to get to know the locals and also ask them about local destinations or ways to get more involved with the community.

## Join Meetup

[Meetup](#) is a great site that connects you with other locals based on your interests. So if hiking is one of your interests, you can select that in your preferences and Meetup will suggest groups for you. After joining a group, you will start getting alerts about upcoming events and you can also check your Meetup calendar to see what's happening on specific days. The interests range from Toastmasters to Spiritual to Karaoke. There's a little bit of something for everyone.

## Conclusion

Traveling alone can be scary but it doesn't have to be! Instead of fearing it, embrace it. Your solo travels are bound to challenge you, but help you grow in ways that you can't even imagine.

These tips on how to fly cheaply, pack, and make friends is just the beginning of your adventure. Head over to our site, [Me Want Travel](#) to learn more about what you can do at destinations all over the world and to see what adventures you can go on, from hiking in Chiang Mai, Thailand to bungee jumping in Northern California. We aim to provide you with a good mix of outdoor, city, and "must-see" experiences so you don't miss anything while you're abroad.

If you have any questions or if our tips have helped you - we want to hear about it! Feel free to e-mail us at [mewanttravel@gmail.com](mailto:mewanttravel@gmail.com).

To connect with us on social media, here are our links. We'd love to hear from you:

[Exclusive MeWantTravel Facebook Group](#)

[Pinterest](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook Page](#)

[Instagram](#)

