

# Around the World Travel Experts

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Planning your first big trip? Advice and humor to get you through the process.

## How To



## How to Pick Great Destinations

Finding great vacation spots is not as easy as it sounds. You've got big world to chose from and a limited amount of time and resources. We provide tips and tools to get you going.

To narrow your focus, consider what you like to do when you travel. Here's a list of common options and recommendations.

### 1) Sight-seeing:

Start with a list of [World Heritage Sites](#). These are forests, mountains, lakes, deserts, monuments, buildings, etc. of exceptional cultural or natural importance, according to UNESCO. There are 878 such sites in the world. A word of caution, some of these spots are now overrun with tourists, so pick some alternatives or at least brace yourself for the crush. We've visited several sites on this list and question their exceptional-ness.

#### For example:

- Angkor Wat, Cambodia: The temples are fascinating, but we were templed-out after one day. Passes are available for one day or three days and will cost more than a decent guest house. (We paid \$40 for our three-day pass). Also, due to the crowds, we couldn't get a guide.
- Ha Long bay, Vietnam: Mob scene, worse than a Red Sox game during penant season. Still, worth a day or two, if you're with a good group.

### 2) Participatory Sports:

- For wind and water sports in the Caribbean and South America, check out [Vela Windsurf Resorts](#). As a beginner, we had good luck at the Margarita resort in Venezuela. For more exotic options, consider [Club Mistral](#) with some caveats. The company is based in Germany, and the salesman who responded to our e-mails had a marginal grasp of English. In addition, when we started asking too many questions, he simply stopped responding.
- For extreme sports, like [bungee jumping](#), [white-water rafting](#), [river boarding](#) (white-water rafting with just a boogy board), you can't go wrong with New Zealand. But New Zealand isn't cheap. If you happen to be in South Africa, we recommend a jump off the [Bloukrans](#) bridge, which costs less and is almost twice as high as the highest jump in New Zealand. [Bungee jumping](#) is available in other countries, including France, Bali, and Kuala Lumpur

### 3) Partying and Festivals:

- [Rough Guides](#) has an interactive list of major parties and festivals around the world. You can sort the list a number of ways.
- If you're looking for drugged-out raves, check out a Full Moon party in Ko Pha Ngan, Thailand, or the Amsterdam Cannabis Cup.
  - If food festivals are more your style, the Adelaide, Australia, Festival of Arts might be a good bet.
  - Just want to some basic nudity? You probably can't miss out with Berlin's Love Parade.

--Randy Ross

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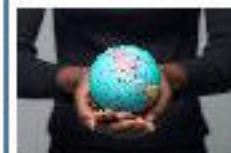


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## Around the World Blog



### Four Months, Eight Countries

On a recent solo trip around the world, the author visited at least one country on every continent. The plane tickets alone cost \$5600. Was it worth it? [more](#)

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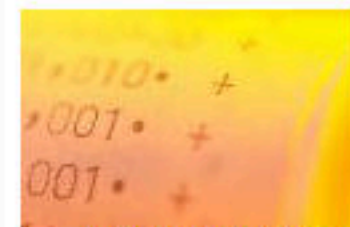
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## Estimate the Cost of a Long Trip

If you're planning a long trip in today's economy, chances are you've got less room for error than you used to. Returning home with big surprises on your credit card isn't an option anymore.

This article will help you develop a rough idea of what your trip is going to cost -- and if you can afford it -- before you fork over any cash. In addition, we've created an easy-to-use [calculation spreadsheet](#) to simplify the process even further.

Two of the biggest factors that will affect the cost of your trip are your choices in destinations and accommodations. For airfare, we'll use estimates based on currently available fares. (We'll discuss more airfares in a future article.)

### Destinations

Travel in the developing world is substantially cheaper than the Western world. A week in Hanoi, Vietnam, with a hostel dorm room, food and drink can run you as little as \$140 a week. That's about \$10 a night for the room and about \$10 a day for a couple of meals and drinks from street vendors. An inexpensive room in Melbourne, Australia, plus food can run three times as much. Europe, Canada, South Africa, the U.K., New Zealand -- they're all pricey.

But if heading West is your goal, all is not lost. Be sure check the currency exchange rates. The dollar has strengthened significantly against many currencies, notably the New Zealand dollar and the South African Rand. These Western countries may be worth a second look, if this trend continues. For the latest, currency rates go [XE.com](#).

### Accommodations

Hostels aren't just for kids anymore. On a recent trip, we stayed at hostels in five different countries. This cut our accommodation costs by at least half. Most hostels were decent. A few were stellar. A couple were barely bearable. Check out our [review of hostels and guest houses](#).

We're not big on staying in dorm rooms, so we always forked out for a single. In a Hanoi hostel that bumped our bill weekly room and board to about \$200 a week, which is still much cheaper than Australia.

Naturally, if you want to spend \$500 a night, you can do that anywhere in the world -- even in a small beachside town in [Vietnam](#).

### Flights, Travel Insurance, and Contingency

The cheapest way to fly is to find a special on one of the sites that specializes in long term travel, like [Airtreks](#) or [Airbrokers](#). Often these outfits use lesser-known airlines, so get all this information upfront before you hand over a credit card. If you've got more to spend or a travel agent you like, check out around-the-world fares on [Oneworld](#) or [Star Alliance](#). Get estimates from a few of these companies and then play them against each other.

For the purpose of this article, we'll assume airfare for a low-cost trip focusing on developing countries at about \$3,000. We'll add another 15 percent for traveler's insurance, which will include medical insurance, trip interruption, and evacuation in case of emergency for four months of travel.

At this point, you should have a subtotal for room, board, flight, and insurance. Then add another 20 percent for contingency (in-country travel, entertainment, and miscellaneous items). If this is your first time on an extended trip, you may need to [purchase gear](#), such as a [backpack](#), and other items that could add another \$800.

Then enter your numbers into our [budget-estimation spreadsheet](#).

[Click here to see sample budgets](#).

May the numbers be with you.

--Randy Ross

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