


5 awesome ways to get more out of your travel





A new concept to get to know the world

Setting out to explore a new country can be daunting even for the experienced traveler. Travel guides will tell you about the major sights and the best restaurants, but they will rarely tell you what cultural pitfalls to avoid and what areas to be careful in. Some travelers find it easy to strike up a conversation with other travelers in their hostel or with the friendly local in the nearest pub, but many feel too shy to simply approach strangers in the hope of friendship or advice.

The internet makes it easy to connect with people from all over the world these days - so why not take advantage of this and get in touch with natives of the country you would like to see or locals living in that particular city you are going to visit on your next trip?

Seeking people in advance on the internet for social sightseeing can have many advantages for travelers, such as:

- Finding out what's really worth seeing and what's not
- Discovering the hidden gems that are not mentioned in the tourist guides
- Getting advice from savvy locals how to best navigate a big city
- Getting valuable insights into different cultures
- Finding a local companion for walks or bike tours to discover the countryside

There are different ways to take advantage of the internet when preparing a new trip. Here are a few of them...

1. Local trip planning

Instead of brooding over Google Maps, figuring out impossible to read bus schedules or drawing on outdated maps in travel guides, simply ask residents online for advice. They know their own airports and train stations and will be able to tell you how to get from A to B after your arrival. They often know which major roads to avoid like the plague because of permanent congestions and what sneaky shortcuts to take advantage of.


If you wonder which of the many interesting museums to choose or whether that picturesque mountaintop chapel is really worth a two-hour slog uphill under a hot sun – Just ask a savvy local online. They will tell you what's really not to be missed in their area and what's just an overrated tourist trap you can safely skip.

Locals will also tell you where to find genuine local food and great drinks at decent prices far away from the touristy areas. It's a good way to get invited into a cool group and spend your evenings making new friends at your travel destination.

Every traveler knows that moment in a foreign city when they look at the "what's on" listings and have no idea what might be worth seeing in the evening. Why not ask someone local in advance? No matter whether clubbing, arthouse cinema or opera is your bag – the internet is a great place to find like-minded people everywhere who can take you along to the really cool clubs where tomorrow's superstars are playing today or tell you what theatre ticket in town is really hot.

If you're into discovering the local culture, people can also tell you where to see the real good stuff beyond the tourist venues – and may even take you out once you arrive.





2. Have a coffee with a local

How often have you sat alone at a restaurant table or in a shady outdoor café, wishing you had someone to talk to? Even with plenty of people around, you just don't want to intrude upon their privacy or are simply too shy to approach random strangers. Use the internet to avoid sitting alone in a café and hiding behind a book. It's easy to find someone online who's around your own age and shares your interest to later meet over a cup of coffee, a glass of wine or even a full meal. You will make wonderful new friends that way and get valuable information and insights about your destination.

Arranging to meet a local will also help you to discover wonderful little restaurants and cafés off the beaten track, where you can best explore the local cuisine or simply savor the atmosphere in a serene little beergarden far from the bustle.

Most travelers roam the streets of a foreign city, wondering what life inside all those walls looked like – but of course they wouldn't dream of just knocking on random doors and asking for a tour of the house. If you make local friends online ahead of your trip, chances are you will be invited into their private homes once you arrive. A great way to see how people really live and look behind the scenes so to speak. You might even be offered a home-cooked meal that surpasses everything on offer in touristy restaurants. Swap ubiquitous pizza and hamburgers for that little known local specialty your host will prepare for you!

3. Discover the city with a local

Sure, you will find your way from the Louvre to the Eiffel Tower and from Big Ben to Piccadilly Circus - but wouldn't it be much more fun to discover the small streets and find the hidden gems of your destination? Why don't you find a local companion for it?

Ask around for people who can advise you on whatever gets your geek on: Discover hidden architectural gems in town, hit the best pubs together or walk in the footsteps of favorite TV-shows and novels with a like-minded fan. Find the trendy boutiques of the coolest area in town a year before the travel guides do, thanks to a local fashionista or hear fascinating stories about the day the Berlin Wall came down from someone who was actually there.

If your interests are of the academic sort, you can also use the internet to find professional guides for your particular area of expertise, whether it's a walk in the footsteps of the infamous Borgia Clan in Rome or a tour around Angkor Wat with a Cambodian historian.



4. Discover the world in a sporty way

Many travelers would love to keep up with their sport during a long trip. But it's hard to know where to go for a nice run in a foreign city or how to find your way around on a bike. Why not find a local online who will take you for a run along their favorite route or on a bike trip into the beautiful countryside. Who knows, they may even have a spare bike for you!

There are sporty people everywhere who will help you out with your hobby: Horse-lovers who know stables that will rent out horses for a long ride in the countryside, golfers who will take you along to their favorite golf course outside the city or climbers who know some great places that aren't yet overrun by tourist groups.

Sporty Sightseeing does not necessarily mean your own physical activity, by the way. If you want to visit one of Europe's legendary football stadiums and feel awkward about going to a match alone, find some fans who will take you along - see teams like Real Madrid, FC Chelsea, Bayern München or FC Barcelona with local fans, learn their songs and celebrate together - or drown your sorrows over a loss together.





5. Chat with a local

If long emails are not your cup of tea and phone calls to the other side of the world are unaffordable, why not use Skype, the free video chat system that connects people everywhere, to chat to people from your chosen destination? It is a great way to ask all the burning questions you have about the country and if you click, you may end up meeting in person once you get there.

If you are one of those people who take pride in learning a few phrases in the local language, Skype is also the perfect way to practice them with a native speaker. You avoid the risk of accidentally insulting someone's mother or simply of not being understood because you got the pronunciation all wrong. Helpful locals will be happy to help you get it right - whether it's ordering your dinner, telling a cab driver where to go or telling that pushy boy in the bar to buzz off.

A photograph of four men sitting around a table in a dimly lit, modern interior space, possibly a cafe or restaurant. They are all smiling and laughing, creating a warm and social atmosphere. The background features wooden paneling and warm, glowing pendant lights. The image is partially obscured by a semi-transparent white overlay at the bottom where the text is located.

All this sounds good to you?

Then you will be pleased to hear that there's actually a new global community out there called [Social Sightseeing](http://www.socialsightseeing.com), where people from all over the world can meet like-minded travelers. No need to search around countless travel forums or social media platforms - whether you set out to explore the world yourself or are keen to welcome people to your own city, Social Sightseeing is the place for you to be!

Please visit www.socialsightseeing.com and join if you share our vision!