

Business as Pleasure:

THE ENTREPRENEUR'S GUIDE TO TRAVEL

Featuring insights from Mike Michalowicz, Donna Fenn and more



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Confessions of a Road Warrior



Rod Kurtz
Editor-at-large, OPEN Forum

Last year, I flew nearly 50,000 miles. This year, I'm on pace to eclipse that. And my travel log pales in comparison to many entrepreneurial road warriors who know how to spot the nearest airport power outlet and can sustain on little bags of peanuts.

By plane, train, or automobile, travel is a reality for most business owners at some point, whether they begrudge it or embrace it wholeheartedly. Technology may have made the world flat, allowing us to fire off emails across time zones and video chat

across the globe, but nothing replaces a handshake and sitting across a table with a valued customer, partner or investor.

That said, the journey can be exhausting. Unexpected delays, rising travel costs and time away from home can take their toll on even the most seasoned journeymen and women. There are some entrepreneurs, however, who have cracked the code—who know when to book, what to pack and how to make the most of their time. And don't forget the often-overlooked but all-important vacation. (Remember that?)

This guide pools that collective knowledge, identifying tips and tactics from those who know the art and science of travel. So whether you're headed across town or across continents, the information here could save you time, money or hassle—or hopefully all three. Consider it essential in-flight reading during your next trip, wherever it may take you.

5 Ways to Make the Most of Your Business Travel Budget

Are all those business trip costs starting to add up? Here are some surprising new hacks to help squeeze more out of your business travel budget.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Geoff Williams

Geoff Williams has written articles on business and entrepreneurship for a variety of publications, including *U.S. News & World Report*, *The Washington Post*, *Reuters.com*, *Forbes.com*, *CNNMoney.com*, and more. He is also the author of several nonfiction books, including *Washed Away* and *C.C.Pyle's Amazing Foot Race*.

Airlines are infamous for their hidden fees and shrinking seats, and it's fashionable to talk about how terrible it is to travel. But small-business owners tend to do it anyway. According to an annual report released in 2015 by the [Global Business Travel Association](#), a trade group, total U.S. business travel spending was expected to increase 6.2 percent to \$310.2 billion in 2015. According to [Certify](#), a travel and expense report management software company, [business travelers spend an average of \\$949](#) on airline costs, hotel fees and other expenses in the United States.

It can get even pricier, of course, when you travel internationally. Not that you need to see statistics to know that traveling is expensive. What you need are tips, advice and strategies for stretching your business travel budget.

So if you want to make the most of your next business trip and don't want to just spend blindly, here are five tips and tricks to consider unpacking before you pack your bags.

1 Fly First Class for Less

Last year, Adam Bierman, a managing partner at [MedMen.com](#), was traveling three to four times a month. Lately, he has been traveling almost every week to clients and events. As a result, Bierman discovered an interesting strategy for getting more for less.

"Some airlines offer huge discounts when you upgrade your flight 24 hours before your departure," Bierman says. "A first class flight from Los Angeles to New York City can be anywhere from \$1,000 to \$2,000. An economy ticket for the same flight can range from \$300 to \$400. Your last-minute upgrade can bump your economy ticket to a first class ticket for an extra \$100 to \$300. This trick can potentially save you a few hundred dollars."

2 Use Public Transportation

Sure, it's nice to be able to walk to a meeting and be in the thick of things by staying at a hotel in the middle of a metropolis. But Martin Milanov, a digital specialist with [Fair Point GmbH](#), a business-to-business travel agency in Frankfurt, Germany, suggests booking a cozy hotel farther away from downtown but near a bus stop or subway station, to save money and still get into downtown easily. If you need to make it from the airport to the hotel, take a bus, taxi or shuttle.

"The era of rent-a-car is long over," he says. "Using public transportation can save you sometimes hundreds of dollars, especially if you're on a business trip for more than a week."

And if you really want to go on the cheap, you could go to your destination by taking the bus, instead of a plane, train or your car. According to "[The Traveler's Tradeoff: Comparing Intercity Bus, Plane & Train Fares Across the United States](#)," a publication from researchers at DePaul University, taking the bus is 50 to 55 percent cheaper than taking the train and 75 percent cheaper than flying.

If you want to hit the road for less, you can check out [Busbud.com](#), which posts bus routes around the world.

3 Try a New App

An app that Kristina Portillo, founder of [BusinessTravelLife.com](#), has found particularly useful is [Hopper.com](#).

"It provides incredible data for planning flights, including cheapest days to fly, which days to arrive and depart, alternate airports and a list of direct and indirect flights with the airline and price," she says.

Some of the app's features include notifications for price alerts and a calculator that adds up extra fees based on the airline, says Portillo, "so you know what you are getting into when you purchase a discount

fare," including fees for extras like checking bags, selecting a seat, accessing Wi-Fi and having a snack.

"While some business travelers have the luxury of billing those charges back to a client, others are traveling to generate business or for other non-billable reasons, and those fees can really add up," she says.

There are numerous other travel apps and websites that could help you save money on a business trip. For more ideas, check out:

- [AwardWallet.com](#). This free site lets you keep track of your rewards programs. If you rack up a lot of frequent flyer miles or hotel and credit card points, you may find it useful.
- [BestParking.com](#). This site is designed to help you find the best parking spot in the city, possibly useful if you're traveling to a far-flung city for a business meeting.
- [iTranslateApp.com](#). If you're on a business trip where you don't know the language, this app will help you translate words, phrases and text in 90 different languages.
- [AirFareWatchdog.com](#). This is basically what it sounds like: a discount airfare site.
- [Neat](#). This app helps serious business travelers easily keep track of receipts and other documents for tax write-offs or reimbursing employees (price ranges from \$5.99 a month to \$24.99 a month).

4 Use Coupon Sites

If you're a fan of coupon sites like Groupon, you might want to consider using them not just for your own personal use in the city you live in, but the city you're going to.

“If you’re traveling to a bigger city for a conference or business meeting and want to check out some nice dining places or simply want to cut some corners with your budget, go to Groupon, LivingSocial or LocalFlavor and their respective phone apps,” Milanov suggests. “With a few hours’ worth of research, you can sort out the majority of your daily expenses while on a business trip with discounts of up to 50 percent.”

5 Get Free Airport Parking

[FlightCar](#) is a rental car service with a twist: If you leave your car with FlightCar while you’re on your business trip, your car may be rented out. Whether it’s rented or not, you’ll get free parking and a free car wash. And if it is rented, on top of your savings, you’ll even make a little money. So far, it’s available at airports in 14 cities: Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, Oakland, Philadelphia, Portland, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Seattle and Washington, D.C.

On an average five-day business trip, business travelers can save \$100 on airport parking fees and make \$30 in rental earnings, according to Rujul Zapparde, FlightCar’s CEO and co-founder.

Thirty bucks. Well, it beats sitting for eight hours in a 29-inch seat and paying for pretzels.



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AND NINON TRUDEL
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“The era of rent-a-car is long over. Using public transportation can save you sometimes hundreds of dollars, especially if you’re on a business trip for more than a week.”

10 Business Expense Apps to Help You Track Your Spending

Your smartphone has the potential to be an assistant in your pocket.



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Glen Stansberry is the co-founder of the social network Gentlemint.com, and has developed a number of websites and startups over the past decade. He's been featured in *Forbes*, *TIME*, *BuzzFeed*, *Fox News* and *CNN*.

Expense tracking may seem to be an afterthought, especially if you travel frequently. (I know I've crammed my share of receipts into my wallet on business trips, only prolonging the agony of having to collect and record them all once I'm back home.) Yet it may be a necessary part of owning a small business, if you want to take advantage of tax laws and avoid potential trouble with the IRS.

Here are 10 business expense apps that may help make expense tracking much less painful.

Evernote

If you're looking for a catchall app, you may want to consider [Evernote](#) (iOS, Android, OSX, Windows, Web). Available on virtually every device across desktop, tablet and mobile, Evernote does well with image capturing and receipt tracking, among other things.

Mileage Log+

If you travel often by car for your business, [Mileage Log+](#) might be a helpful app for tracking your mileage and expenses. The iOS app was designed with IRS compliance in mind, and does some nice things for quickly entering frequent trips. You can also sync and backup your data with Dropbox.

Expensify

[Expensify](#) is a popular iOS app for tracking business expenses that captures receipts, tracks time and mileage, and quickly creates expense reports. The app has built-in SmartScan technology that, like Evernote, is able to find text in pictures. Taking a picture of your receipt means that Expensify can read the image as well, quickly creating the expense.

Concur

[Concur](#) (iOS, Android, Windows) is a comprehensive [time tracking and travel app](#) that allows you to capture, manage and track business receipts, approve expense reports, itemize hotel charges and approve travel requests, to name a few features.

The app also boasts some nifty features for managing travel: You can book airfare and hotels, check in on car and flight itineraries, check flight status and more.

EasyBiz Mileage Tracker Lite

The [EasyBiz Mileage Tracker Lite](#) strips away much of the complexity of mileage tracking. By using GPS pin-dropping (instead of lengthy manual fields), the iOS app can quickly find and track routes that you've used.

Unlike the other apps covered thus far, EasyBiz Mileage Tracker Lite is only a mileage tracker, but may still be handy for road warriors.

MoneyWise

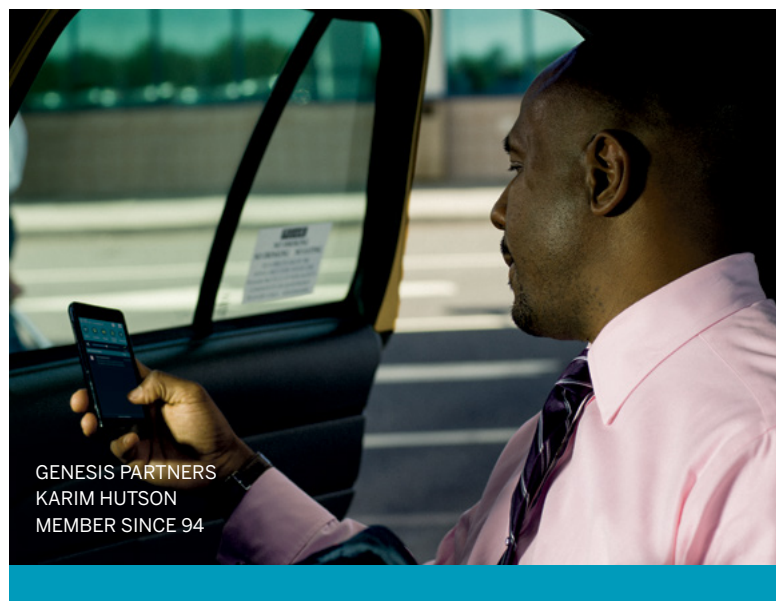
[MoneyWise](#) is more of a universal money management application for Android. Create budgets, monitor cash flow and track expenses on the go. While it's not a business-only app, it may still be a handy expense and cash-flow tracker.

Cashbook

[Cashbook](#) may not win any awards for the prettiest app in the world, but it gets the job done for many Android business owners. It's actually quite robust in terms of features offered. Some notable features include tracking mileage by GPS, backing up to Dropbox, making expense charts and graphs, filing reports, a timer, calculator and more.

Expense Manager

[Expense Manager](#) is an Android app that not only tracks expenses and budgets, but also provides a



clean interface to quickly add expenses. It has some other useful bells and whistles like the ability to add payment reminders, take pictures of receipts, schedule payments and more. The app uses Google Drive to back up data for peace of mind.

FreshBooks Expense Management

[FreshBooks](#) is cloud and time tracking accounting software for businesses. If you already use FreshBooks—and many small businesses do—then the FreshBooks app has expense tracking already built in. Users can quickly assign expenses, as well as track time and send invoices, all from the convenience of your phone.

Shoeboxed

[Shoeboxed](#) (iOS, Android, Web) collects receipts. With Shoeboxed, you can easily snap pictures of receipts and the app extracts the vendor, total amount, payment method, date and also categorizes into the most common tax categories.

These digital scans are IRS-accepted, and can be exported to Quickbooks, Excel and other tools.

The 15 Items I Always Carry When I Travel

Breath mints, a hefty laptop and a four-port power adapter. Those are just a few things I won't leave home without.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mike Michalowicz

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The new rule of business: Be ready anytime, anywhere, always. You are the mobile office. I have come to understand the value of that rule as I've had to set up a mobile office on the road on several occasions. What follows is a list of the 15 items I have with me at all times on every trip.

- A great backpack.** Great backpacks have lots of pockets to help you keep everything separate, accessible and organized. I use the Targus Drifter II backpack and love it. It's specifically designed to fit a large, 17-inch laptop. The traveler's bonus? The yellow colored highlights on the pack make it easy to identify when it's on the luggage bins on an airplane.
- A big screen laptop.** When it comes to weight vs. size, size always wins. For every 30 minutes you spend whining about lugging an extra 6 ounces around the airport, you'll spend 10 grateful hours that you did. Save your eyes by staring at a full-size screen instead of something the size of postage stamp.
- A mini power strip.** I have a mini four-port power strip in my backpack at all times (you can pop-quiz me the next time you see me). Why? Because when you're at an airport and outlets are nowhere to be found, you can pull someone else's cord (with their permission, of course), plug in your strip, plug them back in and then have three more spots for you.
- A USB mini LED lamp.** When things get dark, like on an airplane, a USB LED light will light up your keyboard, or double for a flashlight.
- Dry food.** The only thing that chews up more power than your laptop is you. Feed the beast (you). I always have 2,000 calories of dry food supplies, and a bottle of water, with me. Almonds, KIND bars, M&Ms, dried apples and, yes, more M&Ms are all sealed in bags in my backpack.

- Foldable headset.** I use my laptop for Skyping and listening to podcasts, music and movies. I've found a Logitech foldable headset does the job for anything I need to listen to, without annoying those around me.

 - Construction-class ear plugs.** I used to use those expensive, bulky noise-canceling headsets when I was flying around the country. But they aren't nearly as effective as a pair of \$1 earplugs. I upgraded to the reusable \$3 ones they use on construction sites and love them.

 - Sunglasses and earmuffs.** Weather around the world is crazy. You never know what the weather or temperatures are going to be when you land, so I always have an extra pair of sunglasses and earmuffs in my backpack. Both have saved me on multiple occasions.

 - Paper and pens.** I keep three legal pads of paper and about 10 pens with me at all times. True, I feel like an office supply store, but when you have no power or need to be on the move constantly ... nothing beats pen and paper.

 - Clean undies, socks, T-shirt.** If you travel a lot, odds are an airline will lose your luggage. At that time, having a fresh change of clothes is priceless. I always have spares with me in a bag that can then double as my dirty laundry bag.

 - Pepto-Bismol, aspirin, deodorant, baby wipes.** With these four things you can fly for 24 hours straight, land and go directly to a meeting smelling great—baby wipes and a little deodorant serve as a mobile shower. And you can do dinner and drinks with your brand new client all night, and still wake up feeling great thanks to the Pepto and aspirin.

 - Cables.** Wireless isn't always an option, nor is it always a secure or fast option when it is available. I always have an Ethernet cable. Almost every location still supports plugging in, and the speeds are almost always far superior to wireless. I have a USB, firewire and two power cables. That way I can plug into anything, and if my most important power cable dies, I have a backup.

 - Adapters.** I have a power adapter for European standards. True, not all adapters work in all countries, but if you travel to the same spots regularly you will find the ones you need. With one power adapter, I can plug in my four-plug power strip and get power for everything I need.

 - eBooks.** I used to lug around books—you know the old-fashioned ones—on paper. I have upgraded to a Kindle Paperwhite and love it. The great news is I can read it any time (including takeoff and landing) and highlight sections and make notes directly on the Kindle. Then, when I get back to the office, all the notes are sitting on my computer (via the Kindle website). At any time I've got three new books ready to go on my Kindle, so I can pick based upon the mood that strikes me. And, I compliment each book with the audio version (that goes right onto my iPhone). That way I can listen to the author read, and highlight as I go along. It's the perfect one-two punch.

 - Mints and ChapStick.** You'd think this would go into the duh! category, but road warrior after road warrior forgets. Always have mints or breath strips with you, since you will find yourself at times without access to your toothpaste. ChapStick is also a must to help combat the dry air on air planes and in hotel rooms.
- Admittedly my backpack isn't light. But carrying the weight, probably 10 to 15 pounds, is a small price to pay for my ability to do business anywhere, anytime. What's in your bag?

5 Tips for Working in Remote Places. Bahamas, Anyone?

If your work is all phone calls and emails, why not stay in the Bahamas (or Spain or the South Pacific) for a month? Here are some tips for making it work.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Goforth Gregory

Jennifer Goforth Gregory's work has been published in a variety of print and online publications including Entrepreneur.com, Atlantic.com, Fox Business, MSN Money and *Success Magazine*.

Have you ever wanted to spend the winter on a tropical island? Or is spending a month in Australia on your bucket list?

If most of your client interactions are through the phone or email, you might consider working from an exotic location on your dream list, whether you go for an extended vacation of a few weeks or spend a whole year abroad. Your customers will hopefully have no idea that you spent the morning surfing and that your office is an oceanside deck unless you tell them.

Bill Barrett, president and founder of [GrillGrate](#), has spent a month at a time working from a beach house in the outlying islands in the Bahamas.

"We walk the beach with coffee in the a.m. and grill dinner on the porch at night while working in between," Barrett says. "We're never out of touch—just a world away."

With a little bit of planning, many solopreneurs, freelancers and even many business owners can successfully run their business from across the world.

Here are five things to consider before packing your bag:

Reliably Connecting

The most important consideration for working remotely may be making sure that you will be able to get online. Lara Miller, who owns a California-based PR firm and has worked from remote locations such as Guatemala, India, Southeast Asia, Europe and Indonesia, says her biggest challenge is finding a reliable way to connect to the Internet.

Many travelers find that the most affordable and reliable way to have online access is to rent accommodations with wireless Internet. Miller was able to check email and surf the Web when she rented guesthouses that had Wi-Fi in Southeast Asia, India and Indonesia.



STYLELINER
JOEY WOLFFER
MEMBER SINCE 05

Another option is purchasing a prepaid dial-up service card for the destination.

“While in Guatemala, I purchased a dial-up air card to get online and a local SIM card to check email on my phone,” Miller says. “However, I discovered that the card didn’t work all that well between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., so I would schedule most of my work in the early morning and late at night.”

Since Internet service may be more unreliable than in the U.S., many people find that they need a backup plan, such as being able to connect through their mobile phone. You may also want to have a list ready of the closest Wi-Fi hot spots to your destination. Check out [NuNomad](#) or [Mapping Megan](#) for detailed information on connectivity options while traveling.

Phone Access

Cell phones can quickly rack up a hefty bill making international calls and checking email. Exploring call services that work over the Internet, so you can make calls from your laptop, is one option.

Travelers spending an extended time in a country may want to purchase an international cell phone with a local SIM card. You could buy one when you arrive or

“We walk the beach with coffee in the a.m. and grill dinner on the porch at night while working in between. We’re never out of touch—just a world away.”

*Bill Barrett,
president and founder, GrillGrate*

order through a company and have it delivered to your home in the U.S. before you leave. Since different locals have different phone networks, you want to make sure you order the right card.

In addition to Skype, Barrett uses magicJack, a device that allows you to very inexpensively make phone calls. “[magicJack](#) allows me to maintain a local phone number so people calling don’t even incur a charge to call us directly (or know we are out of the U.S.),” Barrett says.

Setting Your Schedule

If you will need to regularly be in contact with customers back in the U.S., you may want to consider a locale with a minimal time difference. Otherwise, it can help to come up with a plan for being available during critical times and conference calls. If you head to the other side of the globe where days and nights are opposite, you may need to be creative.

Think about the times during the week or the day that you will need to be available by email or phone. Some travelers get up in the middle of the night a few days a week to take calls, while night owls may find staying up late to be a better plan. If you have employees, you may want to delegate tasks such as conference calls or support calls to give you more time flexibility.

Consider setting basic work hours to help you have some structure and make sure you balance your time between exploring and working.

“I have gotten more disciplined about setting goals and projects to complete, and working very early in the morning—sunrise to 9 a.m.—and then again later in the afternoon,” Barrett says.

Getting Equipment and Supplies Overseas

Making a list of the equipment and supplies that you will need to take to your destination and brainstorming the logistics of getting it there can help in setting you up for success. While you can take your laptop with you on the plane, you may want to investigate shipping options if you will need a printer, large monitor or desktop computer. If you are on a remote island, you likely can't run to the store to pick up printer toner or paper.

Learning Some Language

One consideration in selecting a locale is the language barrier. One of the reasons Barrett enjoys the Bahamas is because language is not an issue. For others, learning



to speak another language might be part of the adventure. Learning basic phrases in the language may help. You can also use a language program to learn the language before you leave.

Miller recommends downloading a language translation app to your smartphone to help with language issues. “When I was in Guatemala, I had to learn basic Spanish fairly quickly, but I still struggled. I was scared to walk into a shop to refill my aircard credits because I didn't know how to say it in Spanish. Thank goodness they were able to understand my gestures,” Miller says.

When Going Global, Beware of Cultural Missteps

If you're considering going global, you may want to be aware of business etiquette in the countries you're expanding to. Here are some insights from small-business owners on handling cultural nuances.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Donna Fenn

Donna Fenn has been writing about small business and entrepreneurs for more than 30 years. The author of *Alpha Dogs: How Your Small Business Can Become a Leader of the Pack* and *Upstarts!: How GenY Entrepreneurs are Rocking the World of Business and 8 Ways You Can Profit from Their Success*, she is also a contributing editor at *Inc. Magazine*.

Growing businesses often consider expanding globally. But how do you know when it's time to turn thought into action by taking those first few steps toward global expansion? Perhaps you've got the U.S. market in your back pocket and are looking to ride that momentum into new territory, or your company's growth has stalled and you need to go further afield for new business. Before you take the leap, you may want to assess your existing resources, thoroughly research demand in the market you're considering, and be fully apprised of the laws and regulations that govern foreign trade.

But your preparation doesn't end there. Even the most meticulously crafted global business plan can run aground if you don't pay close attention to the social and cultural elements of doing business on foreign soil. I spoke to a few U.S. entrepreneurs who operate globally for some advice on the subtleties.

Adjust your pace.

"Rule number-one in terms of protocol is take it slowly," says Laurel Delaney, CEO of [GlobeTrade](#), a marketing and management consulting company that helps small businesses expand abroad.

Americans, Delaney points out, have a reputation for being too aggressive and for having a "just get it done" mentality. "You have to be far more sensitive to the idea that the relationship comes first, not the deal," she says. "And that's across the board in any part of the world. Focus 80 percent on the relationship and 20 percent on the deal, and you [may] be extremely successful."

That can require time, patience and an understanding of how long it can take to get deals done in particular countries. For instance, Delaney says, "People



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tend to freak out when they don't hear from a party within 24 hours. But in countries like Japan, it may take two weeks, because everything is consensus based."

Speak the language.

It may be easiest to do business in a country where you speak the language fluently. But when you're compelled to reach out further afield, you may need to pay special attention to how you communicate. John Wilkinson, chief of operations for [Wishbox](#), an e-commerce site that helps small U.S.-based manufacturers export their goods, claims he always tries to communicate in the local language when first contacting a new business prospect.

"I use Google Translate over email," Wilkinson says. "They seem to appreciate that you're trying to communicate in their language."

He also always includes "Please forgive errors, I'm using Google Translate" in his signature. But while Google Translate or similar apps may work to get a new prospect's attention, if the relationship

progresses, you should consider moving on to a professional translation service.

Respect different styles of communication.

Just because you speak the same language doesn't mean you communicate in the same way. Jaspar Weir, a co-founder of [TaskUs](#), has five call centers in the Philippines for his customer service outsourcing company. "It's the number-one location in the world for business process outsourcing and call centers," he says. "There's a real focus on service and very prevalent English."

Because there's such an affinity to Western culture, it's easy to forget that there are cultural differences. "There's a culture around saving face," Weir says. "People don't want to tell you no."

With employees, he claims, he's learned to ask open-ended questions such as, "Can you repeat to me what we discussed you're going to do?" instead of asking questions that can be answered "yes" or "no."

Weir also thinks that bringing a bit of Western business culture to the Philippines gives him a competitive edge. While his competitors run command and control shops where employees can't access social media, TaskUs is more flexible, offering happy hours and dance competitions and thus attracting younger, ambitious college grads.

Be aware of hierarchy.

Many U.S. entrepreneurs may think of their companies as non-hierarchical; they can value workplaces that treat all employees equally, from support staff to top execs. In some countries, particularly in Asia, it may not be quite the same.

In China, according to Kyle Vucko, a co-founder of custom suit maker [Indochino](#), "Hierarchy is very important. You should always first acknowledge the owner of the business and comment on his accomplishments."

Pro tip: Present your business card with both hands and a slight bow.

Vucko suggests that if a business owner is serious about creating a relationship, he or she will make the time to show you around personally (getting passed on to a less senior employee is probably not a good sign). "If things are going well, the meeting will progress to meal, that meal will be very lengthy and, if you're a CEO, you'll sit next to a boss," Vucko says.

Go where your resources lead you.

While you may not have the language or cultural knowledge needed to successfully do business abroad, you may have a hidden asset on your staff. Shortly after Alexander Shashou and his co-founders started [Alice](#), they began thinking about where they might best recruit developers for their hotel management software company. Co-founder and CTO Dmitry Koltunov is Ukrainian, so the startup team didn't need to look far.

“Everyone is an individual at the end of the day, it’s all about two businesses developing a relationship based on their personalities and common interests.”

The company now has eight software developers in Kiev. "It works because of Dmitry," Shashou says. "I don't think it would work if we were in India."

The company flies its Ukrainian employees to its Manhattan headquarters once a year so they can meet and get to know the U.S. team.

"We also travel a lot," says Weir, "and we've put money into setting up our New York offices with videoconferencing software and microphones so it carries well."

To learn more about doing business in specific countries and for information about exporting, check out the U.S. government's [Export.gov](#). And while you should be aware of common customs and practices in different countries, John Wilkinson at Wishbox cautions against making generalized assumptions.

"Everyone is an individual," Wilkinson says. "At the end of the day, it's all about two businesses developing a relationship based on their personalities and common interests."

How to Soak Up Local Culture When Traveling for Business

Just because you're in town for a quick business trip doesn't mean you have to miss out on local culture. Here are four ways to get the most out of your downtime.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mickela Mallozzi

Mickela Mallozzi is the Emmy® Award-winning host and producer of *Bare Feet with Mickela Mallozzi*, a travel series airing on PBS. She is also the Director of the [Women's Travel Fest](#), an annual conference to connect women through travel.

I love travel. My company and travel TV series [Bare Feet](#) was born from my love of dance and my love of travel. I'm the director of the [Women's Travel Fest](#), which my business partner and I founded to really help promote, educate, inspire and empower women through travel, because that's what it's done for our lives.

If you're a small-business owner who's traveling for business, it's easy to feel like you have no idea where you spent the last few days by the end of the trip. To help you actually enjoy your business travel, try any (or all!) of these four travel tips. This way, if you ever come back, you'll know more about the city than if you were focused solely on getting from point A to point B.

Eat like a local.

If you're a small-business owner, you're trying to save money. When I travel abroad, I go to the local market. Most of the places outside of the United States have markets, which run daily or on certain days of the week, that sell in-season food or a specialty. Not only are you getting a taste of what is truly local from that place, you're also meeting some characters and you're practicing using the language. You get a feel for the place outside of a very bubble-like area for tourists. The market is a nice place to get out of your comfort zone while still taking in the local atmosphere.

Are your travels stateside? Instead of grabbing a bite to eat at a chain restaurant, find a nearby local coffee shop, diner, bar or farm-to-table restaurant. (The best way to find these is by picking up the local free newspaper.) By eating locally, you really get a feel for the place you're visiting. Bonus: You'll be supporting a local small business, which helps the local economy.

Rent from the locals.

Renting an apartment from a local can often be cheaper than a hotel. I always rent when I'm traveling, especially in Europe—usually the owner of the place will give you recommendations of where to go and places to see. Also, you're saving a lot of money. You have a kitchen if it's an apartment or house, so you can buy the food that you get in the market, cook at home or pack a lunch.

Get around like a local.

When I go to different cities and airports, I make sure I can find the best route to the city center using public transportation. Most international cities have a really good public transport system from their airports because they want to promote tourism. It's usually a tenth of the price if you took a cab, and you get a better feel for the place you're going to.

If you end up taking a taxi, talk to the drivers. They know the ins-and-outs of the place you're visiting, and they can always give you good tips on where to eat the best local food or hear some music.

Talk to the locals.

This tip goes hand in hand with eating locally: If you're at a coffee shop or a bar, talk to your bartender or the coffee barista—they most likely know the ins and outs of the place you are visiting. Ask for some tips on places to check out in their town. Check the local community website or local newspaper for free events happening in the area: concerts, festivals, weekend markets, readings, talks, you name it! Since most of these things are seasonal, it's fun to jump in with the locals with things that they like to do during specific times of the year. Obviously, I love to dance, so whenever there is a chance to interact with strangers in this way, I'm all about it—it's a great conversation starter!

Also, before you travel internationally, you should learn at least the basic phrases in the local language (“Hello,”



“Don't be afraid to talk to people, because a lot of times, you might be able to connect with them business-wise.”

“Goodbye” and “Thank You”). It goes a long way when you make an effort! Don't be afraid to talk to people, because a lot of times, you might be able to connect with them business-wise. When we were in Argentina, we talked to some people at a club and ended up featuring them in the show.



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