



GO.

A RIDICULOUSLY
USEFUL GUIDE
TO **CHEAP,**
UNCONVENTIONAL
TRAVEL

BY ETHAN MAURICE
www.thelivingtheory.com

A couple things before we get started:

1. There are a number of hyperlinks in this guide that lead to incredible resources, but I encourage you to read the guide in full before exploring any links specifically. While these resources are remarkably useful, they are even more so with an understanding of not just what they are, but how to use them.
2. This guide is free and does not contain any affiliate links (except for [an Airbnb link](#) that will earn us both \$25 in credit if you sign up... it just didn't make sense to get rid of that one).
3. This guide is licensed under the terms of a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#). You can share it with whomever however you like. That said, if you find it worth passing on, I'd appreciate it if you'd point people [here](#) to download a free copy themselves.

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GO.

PART 1

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS UNCONVENTIONAL TRAVEL?

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INTRODUCTION

THIS GUIDE MIGHT CHANGE YOUR LIFE.

As the author, I can't take much credit for this guide's profound effectiveness, for I am merely the middleman between you and the incredible resources I'll be pointing you towards that others have developed. Along the way, I'll sprinkle in a bit of my own travel philosophy and examples from my own endeavors (like how I spent two and a half months in Hawaii for less than what the plane ticket should have cost). For the most part, though, this is about connecting you with the tools and resources you need to follow your globetrotting dreams, regardless of your income or financial situation.

In the next 80 pages you'll learn how to fly for virtually free, find free places to stay, get hired around the globe, make friends anywhere, and all sorts of other useful info I've picked up over the past couple years of my own unconventional travels.

What we're really doing here is exploring all of the options and questioning a couple aspects of our own lives. I urge you to keep an open mind and consider what lies ahead. Think about the possibilities. Don't accept or deny anything immediately, but play with the possibility of the ideas and options put forth.

A QUICK WARNING

To read the following pages is to bite the apple of knowledge. You're going to gain a certain understanding that simply cannot be undone. Once you understand how little money you need to reach your travel goals or experience your dream destination, you may find yourself with a serious case of wanderlust. You may find it difficult to stay put. Not only do I struggle with this constantly... I can't seem to stop giving in.

Stop now if you don't want to bite the apple.

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide was written for anyone with a desire for travel or adventure. It's for teenagers with a couple hundred bucks in their back account. It's for college students looking for summer jobs in far away places. It's for 20-somethings with a lack of responsibilities. It's for workaholics who need some time away from their career. It's for retirees who want to experience a foreign land on a fixed income. It's for anyone who likes the idea of flying to a far off destination for free. Everyone can take something from this guide and use it to open up the world for themselves.

What's so exciting about this guide and the resources that follow is that they make traveling so much cheaper and easier. It's a lowering of the threshold you must overcome to get out and explore our breathtaking, expansive world. And that's the ultimate goal: to lower the threshold you must overcome to get out and experience new things for yourself.

The purpose of this guide is, to put it simply, to help you Go.

WHO AM I?

You're probably wondering who I am and on what grounds I claim the right to give such advice.

Well, my name is Ethan, and I have stumbled upon this realization that living this sort of nomadic, adventurous lifestyle is not only way more fun than tying yourself down in one place, but actually way cheaper, too.



ETHAN MAURICE

Unconventional Traveler

HERE'S MY HIGHLIGHT REEL OF SORTS:



BICYCLE TOURING

Pedaled a bicycle 4,450 miles across the United States while writing a feature-worthy blog and raising over \$96,000 for Phoenix Children's Hospital.



THRU-HIKING

Backpacked the 221 mile long John Muir Trail over three weeks, braving a freak August snowstorm on the highest mountain in the continental United States in shorts. The trek helped to bring in over \$284,000 for type 1 diabetes research.



WWOOFING

Spent 72 days WWOOFing on a farm on the Big Island of Hawaii, backpacking to it's most remote, beautiful locations, hitchhiking over 100 times, and almost getting blown out to sea in shark-infested waters in an aluminum rowboat. Total trip cost: \$669.



LIVING ABROAD

Spent three months living like a local in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. Most of my time was spent writing, attempting to build a location independent online business, writing for The Living Theory, and hanging out with travelers from around the globe.



DECKHAND

Worked as a deckhand on a small luxury cruise ship for three months, saving \$8.5K and learning to pilot a cruise ship, maintain its engines and generators, and manage its electrical systems as we covered the entirety of the U.S. East Coast.



BARTENDING

I'm currently working as the innkeeper / bartender at the Range Rider Lodge, just a mile outside the northeast entrance to Yellowstone National Park. A rustic lodge built in the 1930's, it's full of history involving gambling, prostitution, and Ernest Hemingway. I spend my off time exploring Yellowstone and the surrounding mountains.

Over the past couple years, I've received a lot of questions about how I afford to travel so much and find these incredible opportunities. The answer is a combination of resources, priorities, and other factors that I find difficult to cover in a reasonably short response.

This guide is a comprehensive answer to those questions.

A QUICK VISUALIZATION

Before we get started, I want to do a quick visualization exercise with you.

I want you to think of your dream destination. Where have you always wanted to go? What have you always wanted to do? If you could just close your eyes and when you opened them, be anywhere, where would that be?

Think about it - where would you go?

Do you envision yourself wandering through a crowded, bustling market in East Asia? Maybe you're scrunching your toes in the fine sand of an empty, white sand beach? Or maybe you're wearing a warm down jacket, lying in the fresh powdered snow, and marveling as the northern lights dance across the night sky?

Got it now? Good.

Take two minutes to imagine this place.

Is it day or night? How does the air feel? What noises do you hear, if any? Are you relaxed? Or maybe in a state of awe and wonder? Relish in it. Give it some time and imagine this place the greatest detail possible...

Okay, do you have a mental picture? Awesome.

Now, keep that place in mind while you read this guide. As you examine each concept, tool, and resource presented, consider how it might help you reach your dream destination. The following pages contain the answers to how you can turn that visualization into reality, with very little money involved.

Now, let's get started.

WHAT IS UNCONVENTIONAL TRAVEL?

MORE OPTIONS.

Unconventional travel is a sort of umbrella term to describe a variety of ways one can travel inexpensively by considering all options, many of which are quite “unconventional.” Unconventional travel could be using a credit card airline mileage bonus to fly to Hawaii to hitchhike and backpack around for a couple weeks. It could be working online and living in a foreign country where your money goes exponentially further. It could be acquiring a working holiday visa to live and work in an Australian beach town for a year. It could be buying a van to live out of and exploring the entirety of a continent. It could be swapping houses with someone in the French countryside and experiencing life as a local in another culture. It could be pedaling around the world on a bicycle.

There are virtually endless things that could be defined as unconventional travel, so perhaps it's better to define unconventional travel by what it is not. Unconventional travel doesn't involve paying for expensive motels, hotels, or resorts. It doesn't involve spending wads of money in areas crowded with tourists, overpriced restaurants, or places where shirts are sold with a city's name on them. It doesn't involve travel agents or group tours and often forsakes the term “tourism” altogether.

The unconventional traveler holds nothing against any of those things—he just knows that they are industries and systems designed to make money. There is nothing wrong with relaxing for a week at an all-inclusive resort, but the money spent in that week could amount to months of adventure outside the reaches of tourism.

In rare instances, unconventional travel does involve tourism too, but it's usually for a short period of time while gaming the very system that's designed to take your money.

TIME IS YOUR MOST VALUABLE SOURCE

TIME > MONEY.

In terms of travel, it's vital to understand that your most valuable resource is not money, but time. The ability to spend more than a couple days in one place or to be adaptable with your schedule can save you a ridiculous amount of money when combined with the resources in this guide.

The most common excuse for not traveling is that travel is too expensive. There's a popular quote floating around the internet that reads, "If travel were free, you'd never see me again." What most people don't realize is that they actually have plenty of money to travel (2.5 months in Hawaii cost me \$669, including airfare), but they don't have the time and already have too many obligations and expenses back home.

With free flights from credit card airline mileage bonuses and work-trade programs that offer free room and board all over the world, travel can be exponentially cheaper than living at home. There's simply not much left to pay for when you have a free flight, a free place to stay, and free food.

A quick example: I have a friend (from the U.S.) who recently went to Europe for nine days. She paid for a round-trip flight, stayed in hotels, and ate out often. It cost over \$2,000 for that nine-day vacation in which she saw four different cities.

I cringed as she explained it to me. With a travel credit card bonus and a part-time work trade job, she could have easily spent a month in each of her four destinations with that amount of money.

To me, this seemed an atrocity! She had no idea what she could have experienced! However, I explained this to her, and she didn't really care. She couldn't afford to be away from home for any longer. **Money wasn't her limiting factor. Time was.**

People have to get back to their jobs, bills, and responsibilities back home. Even if traveling the world were free, bills are still piling up and obligations can't go unattended. Most people can't afford to be away for more than a week or two. As you'll learn in the following pages, travel doesn't have to be expensive at all, it's living at home that always seems to be the limiting factor and cost more.

Those who post that quote “If travel were free, you'd never see me again” are blissfully ignorant of this. If you gave them a year of unlimited free travel, most of them would have to return home in a couple of weeks.

So, understand that if you want to travel the world or spend more than a couple weeks on the road, you don't need to be money-rich—you need to be time-rich. Time is more valuable than money, especially when it comes to travel.



LEAKY BUCKET ECONOMICS

NOW, LET'S TALK MONEY.

Let's envision personal economics in terms of a leaky bucket. Money you earn flows into your bucket, and money you spend leaks out. If you make \$20,000 in a year and only spend \$5,000, you've got one well-patched bucket. In contrast, if you make \$100,000 a year and spend it all, your bucket is missing its bottom.

To travel long-term is often to walk away from the flow of money into your bucket. If your bucket is well-patched, long-term travel can be sustainable, regardless of how much money was flowing in. However, if you constantly spend everything you make and your bucket has no bottom, you're always going to be a slave to the faucet.

One of the best ways I've found to patch my bucket and fill it up a bit is to work jobs that include room and board. Without paying for rent or

food, it's quite easy to keep the majority of the money flowing in from leaking from your bucket.

A concrete example: I worked as a deckhand for American Cruise Lines and in three months I made \$9,800, saving over \$8,300 (including my expenses from back home). Then, following my time on the cruise ship, I spent two and a half months on the Big Island of Hawaii. With a flight at a fraction of the cost (more on that later) and the WWOOF Program (more on that later too) my summer in paradise cost me a total of \$669 – less than a round trip plane ticket should have cost.

Contrary to what most people think, traveling inexpensively for long periods of time isn't all that difficult. Patching your bucket is the hard part. Everyone's financial bucket is inevitably leaky, but patching it well enough that you can go for weeks, months, or years without needing to add money allows one to use the strategies and resources in this guide to travel for extended periods of time. If you have car payments, loans,

rent, and other bills piling up at home, no matter how cheaply you travel, your financial bucket is going to leak too fast to spend significant time on the road.

So, the first consideration in travel is not so much about how to travel cheaply, which is quite easy with the resources in this guide. Rather, it's about how to patch your bucket so that, during your time away from the flow of money into your bucket, it won't empty so fast.

HOW WELL IS YOUR LEAKY BUCKET PATCHED?

Take some time to examine your financial bucket. Does it have a bottom? How well is it patched?

Try listing out all your reoccurring expenses and how much they cost you each month. Which could you patch right now? Which could you patch in the future?

If you're serious about spending more than a couple weeks away from home, examining and patching some of your bucket's leaks is vitally important. Investing a bit of time now can produce a huge return over the long run. Remember, that's not water, but time and money leaking from your bucket!

If your bucket isn't patched well enough to hold for significant time away from the flow of money, regardless of whether you're traveling or not, you're always going to be a slave to the faucet.

"WE NEED SO LITTLE TO BE HAPPY. HAPPINESS DOES NOT COME FROM THINGS. HAPPINESS COMES FROM LIVING A FULL AND EXCITING LIFE."

- Ken Ilgunas

PART 2

HOW TO FLY FOR FREE

HOW TO STAY FOR FREE

HOW TO FIND A JOB ANYWHERE

HOW TO FIND FRIENDS ANYWHERE ON EARTH

HOW TO FLY FOR FREE

TRAVEL CREDIT CARDS RULE.

The credit card airline mileage bonus is perhaps the most powerful tool of the unconventional traveler. If you've never heard of such deals before, it might seem like a fringe or shady way to fund your travels, but they're actually quite straightforward and remarkably valuable.

Basically, you sign up for a credit card that offers a bonus and spend a certain amount of money within a given time period. Then, you're rewarded with a ton of airlines miles for doing so.

I'd always been wary of credit cards and things that involve interest, but after a few years of hearing how great these bonuses are, I decided to give one a try. I signed up for a Mastercard through Hawaiian Airlines that offered 35,000 bonus miles if I spent \$1000 within three months of activation.

The process was a bit sloppy as the card came with an \$89 yearly fee (which most cards waive the first year) and the bonus came up a bit short of covering both my flights. In all, though, I paid \$210 for a \$726 round-trip flight without incurring a cent of interest.

I've since canceled that Hawaiian Airlines Mastercard and opened up two other cards. One I used to completely cover a round-trip flight from Phoenix to Cancun for a three-month stay in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. The other offered the largest bonus I've earned yet and provided enough points for me to fly round-trip to Europe or Asia in the near future.

If you don't have thousands of dollars lying around to spend on flights, you'd be crazy to not take advantage of these credit card bonuses. They are huge. You can earn anywhere from \$200 to \$1000+ on flights with a single credit card signup bonus (my first two cards were worth about \$500 each; my third one, over \$1,000).

Listen, though. Don't get the card and go on a wild spending spree to

reach your bonus. Buy what you normally would and use the credit card as the “middleman” of sorts, paying it off immediately after with your debit card.

*If you don't spend enough money to reach a bonus in time, don't fret, for there's another way. Take a look at this article I wrote on [manufactured spending to reach your mileage bonus](#).

HERE ARE MY 4 SIMPLE RULES TO AVOID CREDIT CARD FEES:

1 WHEN YOU MAKE A PURCHASE WITH YOUR CREDIT CARD, PAY IT OFF. Pay it off the following day or set a reminder to pay your balance weekly. This way you'll never risk incurring a cent of interest.

2 KEEP A SPREADSHEET for your cards so you don't forget about yearly fees. Here's a screenshot of mine:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Card	Date Applied	Date Activated	Yearly Fee Date	Yearly Fee	Mileage Bonus	If Spent Over
2	Capital One Venture Card	09/11/15	09/21/15	09/14/16	\$59.00	40000	\$3,000.00
3	Citi / Aadvantage Platinum Select MasterCard	11/07/15			\$95.00	60000	\$3,000.00
4							

3 LOOK AT YOUR SPREADSHEET PERIODICALLY. Set a reminder for every month or two. Make sure you're not going to run into unnecessary yearly fees soon.

4 ONCE YOU'VE SPENT THE MILES OR IF YOU'RE GOING TO RUN INTO A YEARLY FEE, CANCEL THE CARD. Some cards take away your miles once you cancel, so make sure you buy a ticket or transfer that mileage to another account before canceling.

That's it. Simple. All benefits if you can pay off your purchases right away and cancel your card before the yearly fee comes around.

Everyone's healthily concerned about what applying for all these credit cards will do for their credit score. The answer—it's quite minimal. To give you a better idea, credit card mileage master [Chris Guillebeau](#) chronicled an experiment applying to and acquiring [13 credit cards in five weeks](#). It temporarily dropped his credit score 4%. If you apply for one or two travel credit cards, the drop is temporary and should be nearly undetectable.

HERE ARE TWO WEBSITES I USE TO HELP YOU FIND THE RIGHT CARD:



TWO MORE FLIGHT RESOURCES

Unfortunately, these credit card airline mileage bonuses rarely seem to be offered to anyone outside the United States. So, if you live elsewhere or can't get a travel credit card for whatever reason, here are two great resources for finding insanely cheap flights.



The Flight Deal is probably the best site on the internet for finding crazy cheap flights. They're a small team that scours the web for the best deals on flights and then posts links to them on their website. It's rare to run into the exact flight you're looking for, though. Their site is best if you're open to many or at least multiple destinations.



Airfarewatchdog is the best flight resource for when you have a specific destination in mind. They have the most comprehensive flight search engine, and more importantly, you can get email alerts when great deals appear out of your home airport or on specifically chosen routes.

HOW TO STAY FOR FREE

HOTELS ARE OVERRATED.

Our next big economic hurdle is finding a place to stay. Where are you going to crash for the next three nights, the next three weeks, or the next three months? Most people's first reaction is to look for a hotel or resort, but for an unconventional traveler who examines all the options, hotels and resorts are often the last places they consider.

Here are 3 websites that can help you find a free place to stay:

couchsurfing

Couchsurfing connects travelers with locals who want to host them for free, all over the world. There are currently 400,000 hosts worldwide who want to share their home with you at no cost. Why? Because people who travel are notoriously awesome. They get to swap stories and hang out with awesome people from all over the world!

Everyone has their own profile, and there is a prominent review system—so there's little need to worry about a host being some undercover creepy dude, just read their reviews.

BEST FOR: One or a couple nights

SIGN UP COST: Free (Can be verified member for \$20/year but it's far from mandatory)



TrustedHousesitters connects home and pet owners with housesitters all over the world. You join, make a profile, and can apply to take care of someone's house while they're away for anywhere from a couple days to 6+ months at a time. You'll need to create a quality profile, complete with some friendly looking photographs of you and animals, and get a couple references if you're looking to house sit in one of the more desirable locations.

BEST FOR: Weeks or months at a time

SIGN UP COST: \$99 per year



HomeExchange connects homeowners that are interested in swapping places. You can make a profile and trade places with 65,000 other members in 150+ countries. It's a great option to live like a local in a faraway land without paying for a place to stay. HomeExchange doesn't discriminate between renters and owners but suggests you bounce the idea off your landlord if you rent before exchanging.

BEST FOR: Usually a week or two, sometimes months at a time

SIGN UP COST: \$150 per year

WORK TRADE

There are a couple major websites that connect travelers with hosts who offer room and board in exchange for part-time work. With the two below, you can live nearly anywhere on Earth with other travelers almost completely devoid of living expenses. Note: not all hosts were created equal. You'll find some places expect a lot for what they offer in return. Others will seem largely weighted in your favor. Search around, read reviews, and [discuss specifics with a host before you go](#) to ensure you're heading somewhere amazing.



HelpX is short for Help Exchange, which connects volunteers with a wide array of work-trade opportunities all over the world. You can exchange part-time work for room and board at farms, homestays, ranches, lodges, B&Bs, backpacker hostels, and even on sail boats, among other things.

BEST FOR: A couple weeks to 6+ months

SIGN UP COST: 20 Euros (currently \$22 USD) for 2 years



WWOOF is an acronym for Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms. Basically, you work on an organic farm for a set amount of hours each week in exchange for room and board. You'd think WWOOF was a single organization, but there's actually over 100 WWOOF programs throughout the world for various countries and regions, so you have to know where you want to go before signing up.

I joined WWOOF Hawaii and worked on a farm on the Big Island. I worked for 20 hours per week and in highly varied roles from planting trees to driving a skid loader to minor construction projects. I learned lots, enjoyed my work hours, and still had the majority of my time to enjoy the island. I got my own cabin, \$60 a week for food, and our hosts took us on adventures throughout the island. However, there were other farms on the island that had WWOOFers picking weeds for 30 hours a week and living in tents.

I'm stating this a second time for a reason: read reviews and **discuss specifics with the host beforehand**. Make sure you're going somewhere awesome before you go.

BEST FOR: A couple weeks to 6+ months

SIGN UP COST: Varies, WWOOF Hawaii cost \$30/year for membership

ALTERNATIVE PLACES TO STAY

If you're not interested in sharing space with a host or trading time for a free place to stay, below are some other cheaper alternatives to motels, hotels, and resorts.

HOSTELS

Hostels are often the cheapest way to stay in a tourist zone. Though you only get a bunk in a room shared with other people, you'll often be glad that you're sharing space with them. Usually, those who stay in hostels are particularly awesome and looking to meet other travelers, which often lead to random, shared adventures. Hostels are the sort of internationally recognized symbol of budget travel and guests often originate from around the globe.

BEST FOR: Anywhere from one night to a week

SIGN UP COST: Varies between locations

facebook

If you want to rent long term like a local in a far away land, you can use Facebook to find locals renting to one another almost anywhere in the world. **This is HUGE because you're not paying the often inflated foreigner rental price, but dealing directly in the local real estate market.**

Here's how it's done:

Wherever you want to rent, start a Facebook search with the city or town's name, and follow that with “housing” or “rentals” or other words of that nature.

In Playa del Carmen, the biggest rental page is called “Rentas en Playa del Carmen.” You may need to use the local language word for housing or rentals to find the page. Owners post pictures of the property with a price and description. It's not as easily navigable as most rental sites, but it's way

cheaper than anything that will be offered directly to foreigners. It gets you right into the local housing market without the middleman.

BEST FOR: 6+ months, but you can negotiate short term with owners

SIGN UP COST: Free



Airbnb allows anyone to rent their home or other living space out through their website. With high-quality photos and a detailed review system, it allows travelers to confidently find unique, and often less expensive, alternatives to hotels and resorts. You can rent an extreme variety of spaces from bedrooms to bungalows to treehouses to entire homes. Often, these places come with kitchens (unlike most hotels and resorts), so you can save further by shopping at a local market or grocery store and doing the cooking yourself.

BEST FOR: A night, week, or sometimes monthly rates

SIGN UP COST: Free (Use this link and we'll both get a \$25 credit!)

HOW TO FIND A JOB ANYWHERE

GET PAID TO TRAVEL.

The following sites are excellent resources to help you find a job far from home. Keep in mind: if you're just looking to minimize the cost of traveling, work-trade websites in the "How to Stay for Free" chapter can get you room and board in exchange for part time work. This section is a list of resources that allow you to make and save serious money.



CoolWorks is the most badass, awesome job board on the internet. It's a website that only allows employers to list cool jobs or jobs in cool places. Just reading through their job board is inspiring. Opportunities are listed in national parks, ski resorts, rafting companies, summer camps, travel companies, beach towns, ranches, and an endless variety of other cool places. I almost applied for a job that required being helicoptered into and out from a glacier working with sled dogs, but instead opted for to work as an innkeeper/bartender a mile outside Yellowstone National Park.

Many jobs on CoolWorks offer free or discounted housing and some will feed you too, allowing you to save (instead of spend) your paycheck. It's the ultimate resource for finding adventure while filling your financial bucket.



You probably won't find this one listed anywhere else. Last year, I worked as a deckhand for American Cruise Lines for three months. It's no cakewalk—I had to work 12 hours a day for 3 months straight, which might sound crazy, but I loved my time on the water.

American Cruise Lines runs small, luxury cruise ships throughout the waterways of the United States. They almost exclusively hire deckhands and stewards with no experience for payment structure and tax reasons. It's by far the easiest way to gain experience on the water. In 3 months, I made just shy of \$10,000 while building an unbelievably diverse skill set. I learned how to steer a cruise ship, handle lines when docking the ship, and tie all sorts of knots. By the end of my contract, I could change the oil on the cruise ship, troubleshoot the A/C system, manage generators, clean filters, read radar, and even pilot the ship while underway. I was the go-to deckhand of sorts and was asked to stay on to train as a QMED (Qualified

Member of the Engine Department). I've also been offered a couple jobs on private yachts since. Whether you work as a deckhand or steward, American Cruise Lines can be a gateway to full-time jobs on major cruise ships or the private yacht industry. It's a great way to build a long-term nomadic lifestyle or just make some serious cash while out on the water. If you're willing to work or interested in boat life, I highly recommend it.

TEACH ENGLISH ABROAD

If you're a native English speaker, you can get paid to teach English in dozens of countries around the world. If you have a bachelor's degree (in anything), you're even more qualified, and if you take a relatively short TEFL course, you can make a serious amount of money teaching English abroad. Asia tends to be the highest paying place to teach abroad. Some of the most popular countries are South Korea, China, and Taiwan—and you don't need to know the language of the country you're going to to get hired. Many recent college grads get their certification and go teach in South Korea for a year, making \$24K-\$30K a year with many of their expenses (rent, airfare, health insurance etc.) covered. This allows them to pay off student loans or save a substantial amount of money while deeply experiencing a foreign environment and culture.

WORKING HOLIDAY VISAS

If you're between 18 to 30 years old, you can get a working holiday visa that grants you the ability to legally work in a foreign country for a year or two (depending on the country). The work is often supposed to be “non-professional,” so think more along the lines of working a non-managerial job in tourism, waiting tables, or doing more labor-intensive work in a foreign country. These work visas are extremely popular in Australia and New Zealand. They can be a great opportunity to sustain your travels or intimately experience a foreign culture over the course of a year or two. Click the link for specifics on each country and info on the process of obtaining a working holiday visa.



alliance abroad group®

This link is a sort of “training wheels option.” If you want to live and work abroad for an extended period of time, but feel overwhelmed by the prospect of moving to a foreign country and figuring it out upon arrival, this is a worry-free way to set everything in place beforehand.

Alliance Abroad will guarantee you job placement in Australia for a six or twelve month position and help you handle all the paperwork and red tape surrounding working in a foreign country. We're talking jobs with good pay at high-end resorts and restaurants, paying between \$16-\$25 AUD per hour. It costs \$1,500 for a six month contract or \$2,500 for a twelve month contract, but they'll do all the legwork for you. When you complete your contract, you'll end up with a solid lump of cash and the experience of living as a local in one of the most beautiful parts of Australia.

BECOME A DIGITAL NOMAD

The internet is reshaping the way our world works. We're currently in the midst of a massive rise in location independent, online work, and a decent internet connection can be found in most parts of the world today. The term “digital nomad” has been coined to describe the people who take advantage of this location independence while working online. There are now thousands of digital nomads who travel or live abroad while working over the internet. I met dozens of them in Playa del Carmen, Mexico. In fact, my roommate was one.

Most digital nomads unsurprisingly get paid for their computer-based skills—coding, web design, programming etc.—but there are definitely other paths to digital nomad freedom. One simple way to get started would be to get on [upwork.com](https://www.upwork.com) and apply to work on other's projects as a freelancer (working as a writer, virtual assistant, or customer service representative all don't require in-depth computer knowledge). A tech-based career is also worth consideration if you're looking to create a

long-term, mobile lifestyle for yourself. The link included goes to Nomad List, which has in-depth discussion forums on all things digital nomad related and does a remarkable job of helping you sort through the best places around the world to work remotely.

Remember: There are endless opportunities out there. These are but a few of the most common or easiest ways to make money while traveling that I've encountered.

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS ANYWHERE ON EARTH

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO IT ALONE.

Another common excuse to not travel is that you can't convince any friends to come along. Nobody wants to be lonely, and people often worry that they won't make any friends upon arrival. I've felt this worry and frustration with my friends back home many times. I can't even get most of them to leave the state, let alone the country.

Eventually, I realized I'd just have to take a leap of faith and hope I somehow met and befriended people when I got there. I imagined myself failing to befriend groups of random strangers and friendlessly wandering through a foreign land, depressed and longing for home.

This fear is totally unwarranted. Believe it or not, the travel buddy you

wish you had is there waiting for you right now. In most cases, you won't even have to look to find them. Go work on a cruise ship – your roommate and co-workers will become your best friends. Go WWOOF on a farm – your fellow WWOOFers will become family. Go bounce through hostel after hostel in Southeast Asia—all the other random travelers staying in each hostel want to hang out with you just as badly as you want to hang with them.

Travel is about experiencing new people, places, and cultures. Even if everyone else shows up in groups, they're looking to experience what's new around them— **including you.**

That said, when you leave the path of other travelers, you have to work harder to meet people. For instance, when I rented an apartment in Playa del Carmen for three months this spring, I was a bit worried I'd have trouble making friends while not sharing a living space or working with a bunch of other people. It forced me to dig deeper. I discovered these four incredibly useful resources:

couchsurfing EVENTS

Couchsurfing provides more than a connection between local hosts and travelers; it's also home to active event boards in most places. It's an incredible resource for finding things to do and cool people to do things with.

A couple weeks into my stay in Playa del Carmen, I decided to host my own Couchsurfing event. A week in advance, I posted an event titled “Grab a Beer With Fellow Couchsurfers” and crossed my fingers hoping three or four people would show up. To my surprise, over a dozen interesting, well-traveled people from seven countries converged on my table that night. Not only was it an incredible night, it sparked some of my closest friendships and many other Mexican adventures.

HOSTELS

If you're looking to meet people wherever you go, hostels are a great option. They are a fraction of the cost of hotels, attract travelers, and they are meant for meeting and mingling. Whereas people mostly keep to themselves in hotels and resorts, hostels are all about meeting people, sharing spaces, and sharing experiences. By no means do you have to participate in this collective atmosphere, but it's effortlessly easy to, making them the best option if you're looking to meet others to share the adventure in a foreign land.



Meetup is for meeting people with common interests. It's similar to a Couchsurfing event, but with a broader range of people than just travelers. There are Meetups for entrepreneurs, photographers, musicians, hikers, bikers, travelers, and basically any other interest that people could possibly share. Take five minutes to create a profile and go check out an event or host your own. It's a great way to befriend locals too, not just fellow travelers.

facebook GROUPS

Another little-known, hugely useful function of Facebook – there are location-based Facebook groups all over the world. Try searching for your destination and anything you're interested in doing there to find there who share those same interests. Examples might be hiking, surfing, entrepreneurship, or other things of that nature.

I found my roommate in Playa del Carmen through the Digital Nomads in Playa del Carmen Facebook Page after asking for advice on renting an apartment for a couple months. This specific Facebook group had a hangout/networking event every couple weeks that often involved food, drinks, and rooftop bars. It was a great way to meet people, share ideas, and get advice from others who know more about working online than I do.

You can also look at 'expat' Facebook groups and pages wherever you want to go (in case you're wondering—'expat,' or expatriate, means

someone who's moved abroad). Expat groups tend to be active and full of interesting people. Their events and hangouts are great resources for making connections as well. Simply do a Facebook search with “[your destination] expats” and you should find what you’re looking for.

As with all forms of meeting new people, you never know who you're going to meet. You might meet someone you end up in a relationship with and someone you can't stand being around for more than five minutes in the same evening.

I've met many new faces over the past couple years and have learned to trust my gut. We humans are remarkably good at snap judgments—if someone seems good natured and fun they probably are. If someone seems creepy or “off,” steer toward hanging out with others in the group. These meetups tend to happen in public places with lots of people around. **As long as that's the case, there's no reason to worry that these resources would put you in any additional danger.**

Don't be too timid or afraid to meet people through these resources either. The events are more inclusive and cause less social anxiety than almost any other new social experience.

PART 3

CONSIDERATIONS & GETTING SHOESTRING CHEAP
EXAMINING MY ADVENTURES
GO.

CONSIDERATIONS & GETTING SHOESTRING CHEAP

PLAN THE BIG THINGS.

Unconventional travel often requires a bit of foresight and planning. You don't need to figure out every detail months in advance, but you often need to set the big pieces in place before you go.

Those big pieces include travel credit card bonuses, work trade gigs, actual jobs, or anything else you might apply to. It's not a requirement to set these things up in advance, but doing so will usually improve the quality of the experience and make your travels cheaper.

Unfortunately, with travel credit card bonuses you can't just apply for a credit card a week before you need a flight. There's often two or three months between the time you apply and when you actually receive the

bonus.

You have to apply for the card. Wait to receive it in the mail. Spend the required amount of money to get the bonus. And often wait for the next monthly billing cycle to receive your bonus miles. If you want to fly in the summer, start the process in the winter or early spring.

With anything from work trade to actual jobs to swapping houses, it's best to start feeling out opportunities a couple months in advance too. A short-term example: I applied for my job next to Yellowstone only a bit over a month in advance. A long-term example: I secured my summer Hawaiian WWOOFing gig in January (as I was lining it up following the completion of my contract on a cruise ship).

Ultimately, how far you should plan ahead depends on your situation. **Just keep in mind that the resources in this guide work best when you use them ahead of time.**

TIME FRAMES

To go is what's most important, but let's examine the pros and cons of the varying durations of travel. While you will most likely get more from three months away from home than three days, there are pluses and minuses to each time frame. The right one will always be the one that works best for you.

To make comparing various travel time frames easier, I've split them into three categories: Trips (a week or less), Expeditions (1 to 4 weeks), and Extended Travels (a month or longer).

TRIPS

TIME: A week or less

BEST RESOURCES: Couchsurfing, Hostels, Airbnb

Trips are short but often packed full of fun and experience. Because time is limited, motivation to do as much as possible runs high. With that extra pressure to do, trips are great for creating moments but don't provide the depth of experience or learning that longer time frames can produce.

EXPEDITIONS

TIME: 1 to 4 weeks

BEST RESOURCES: Trusted Housesitters, HomeExchange, WWOOF, HelpX

Expeditions, representing the middle ground, are unsurprisingly a hybrid of the shorter and longer time frames. A couple weeks still provides motivation to get out and experience everything, but that motivation isn't as potent as in a shorter time frame. Expeditions allow one to get a feel for a new place or culture, learn some things, and wrestle with differences between there and home, but not to the degree of extended travels.

EXTENDED TRAVELS

TIME: A month or longer

BEST RESOURCES: All Jobs in “How to Find a Job Anywhere”, WWOOF, HelpX, HomeExchange, TrustedHousesitters

Extended travels allow you to dive to the greatest depths. Spending months away from home allows for serious immersion and can produce the strongest lessons and takeaways from an experience. With enough time, you can become intimately acquainted with what once was a foreign culture and may even feel more like a foreigner upon returning home. However, with a time frame of multiple months, procrastination can hinder that passionate, time-limit-induced motivation to get around to doing the things you really want to do like in shorter time periods.

No time frame is inherently better than another. I'm definitely a fan of immersive extended travels, which I've found to have the most impact on my life. However, I often punctuate extended travels with short trips to

places with friends, where knowing that you have only a couple days or nights somewhere provides extra motivation to make the time count. The ideal situation isn't to repetitively chunk your travels into a single time frame, but rather into a variety of time frames to benefit from the positives of each.

"DEEP TRAVEL"

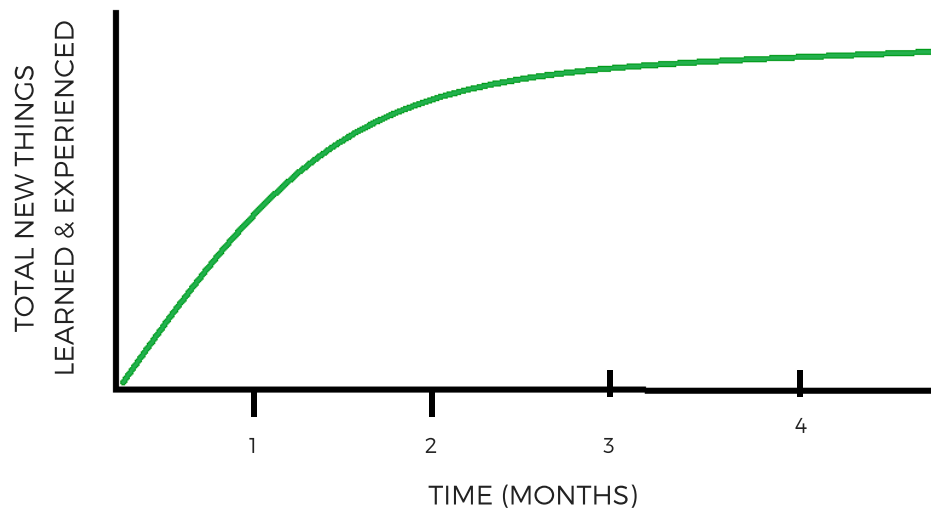
We've covered each time frame, but I want to devote a bit of extra attention to extended travel. Curiously, most of my trips, travels, and adventures end up taking between two and a half to three months. This seemed like a coincidence at first, but I have come to regard such a time period as the sweet spot to get the most learning and novel experience for my time.

In arriving somewhere new or starting an adventure, I'm often a novice and find myself a bit outside my comfort zone. As a result, those first two months or so are saturated with novelty, learning, and development of

new perspective. Heading into the third month, I'm usually starting to get quite comfortable and find myself settling into a routine, which has become the signal that it's time to move into new, uncharted territory.

Personally, three months seems to be ideal. Less time, and I wouldn't fully settle in and learn. More time, and I think I'd see diminishing returns on learning and novel experience.

NOVELTY EXPERIENCED OVER TIME



This style of travel, where you intimately get to know a place or experience, has been termed “slow travel.” Google it and you can find a wide variety of info on the subject. I'm a huge proponent and have lived the past couple years of my life in such a style, but I really dislike the name. Nobody gets excited about nor wants to associate with “slow.”

I prefer to call this style of travel “deep travel.” Deep—because when spending a couple months in one place or away from home, you gain a depth of perspective and understanding that travelers who spend a day or week somewhere won't.

Whatever you call it, taking the time to deeply experience somewhere or something can provide incredible insight. It's profoundly worthwhile to step out of the life, routine, and culture of home for a couple months, at least once in your life, to experience another way of living and to view the world through another lens. “Deep travel” is the ultimate exercise in understanding and humility.

A SORT OF MINIMALISM

Travelers tend to lean further and further into a sort of minimalism the more they travel. A full-size suitcase stuffed with options isn't inherently bad—choice is a beautiful thing—but lugging extra stuff around gets old fast. Upon arrival, walking a couple miles through a brand new town can be a breathtaking experience, but when you add overstuffed baggage into the mix, a leisurely stroll can become breathtaking in a less desirable way.

Travel itself is about the experience and things that can't be physically held—the excitement and sense of possibility as you immerse yourself in new, the presence inspired by novelty and lack of understanding, and the perspective gained from living in another role or culture. These things are far more important and memorable than anything you could ever physically take from a place.

This developed minimalism leads to lighter, deeper travel. It forces your

involvement in where you actually are when you don't bring the comforts of home along with you. Strive to collect wondrous experiences rather than physical souvenirs. Fewer things tend to lead to a higher quality of experience.

DON'T GET GEAR OBSESSED

Following this notion of parting from the physical, let's talk about gear. People obsess over gear. The latest backpack, the lightest sleeping bag, and things as outrageous as “high-performance shoelaces” become a focus for some people. It's so easy to be tricked into feeling that we need the latest and greatest gear to be serious travelers, but that's absolutely untrue.

The whole point of this guide is to make travel cheaper and more easily attainable. Falling into the trap of gear obsession would have the opposite effect.

I bought the backpack I've used for the last seven years in far from new condition for \$27. My first sleeping pad was a high end \$120 pad that I bought with a leak for \$4 and patched it. I buy my trail running shoes on clearance and run in them until they physically fall apart. I've used my dad's old fleece jacket to keep warm for the past three years and as a pillow for over one hundred nights of camping.

Start thrifty. You want things that are functional, but don't worry about the top of the line gear initially. Once you've become acquainted with your gear, you can make more rational decisions about what would be worth spending to improve upon.

Gear exists merely to assist you in your travels and adventures. It does not define you.

LOOKING FOR CHEAP GEAR?

For used gear, I've had my greatest success with [REI Garage Sales](#) and [Craigslist](#). For deals on new stuff, I recommend checking out: [The Clymb](#), [Steep and Cheap](#), or [Sierra Trading Post](#).

EAT & DRINK BEFORE GOING OUT

As social beings looking to explore and experience while traveling, we often find ourselves at festivals, restaurants, bars, and other often pricey venues where people eat and drink. Eating dinner or drinking five beers at such a place can be outrageously expensive, but the unconventional traveler need not fear them. Even though we may be operating on a shoestring budget, we don't have to compromise our experience to save money. We just have to live with a bit of foresight.

Let's say you're going to a music festival where a hot dog cost \$5 and beer is \$8 a pint. Rather than spending \$40 on food and drinks, just eat

or drink before you go out. Then you can grab one hot dog instead of three. Or, if you're going out to a club for the night, drink before you go out. Then you can buy a beer or two instead of seven beers at five times the price.

With a bit of foresight, we can still have all the fun and experience everything without making a huge dent in our bank accounts. While a friend might spend \$40-\$100 for a long night out, I often spend around \$10 to \$15 for the same experience.

You'd be amazed at the effect eating and drinking before you go has on your bank account. If you're looking to travel on a shoestring budget, don't take this lightly!

EXAMINING MY ADVENTURES

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES

To really drive home a couple points and show how powerful the resources in this guide can be, let's examine a couple of my own adventures. These are concrete, real-world examples of the power of this guide in use with specific adventures that you can easily replicate.

WORKING AS A DECKHAND ON A CRUISE SHIP

As a shining example of the saving power of a job that includes room and board, let's first examine my twelve weeks as a deckhand for American Cruise Lines.

Over those twelve weeks, I made \$9,800 and spent a bit less than \$1,500, managing to save \$8,300. I saved nearly 85% of the money I made, which is absolutely outrageous! Do you know anyone who only spends

15% of their income?

What may surprise you even more, though, takes us back to "bucket economics" and the reality of how much our expenses back home still cost us while we're away. Of the \$1,500 I spent while working on the ship, \$711 were bills. Just my student loans (\$207 per month) and my cell phone bill (\$30 per month) managed to be almost half of my total expenses.

If I had rent or car payments, the vast majority of my expenditures would have been things back home draining my bank account. I've lived deliberately to keep these bills to a minimum, yet they can still take up almost half my budget while on the road!

The importance of keeping your costs from back home low to travel for longer periods of time cannot be emphasized enough. Patch your bucket!

In the end, I saved \$8,300 over twelve weeks, but it was about more than saving money. I had a blast covering the East Coast from Florida to Maine. I learned to pilot a cruise ship! I blasted around St. Augustine, FL on a moped. I had a front row seat to history during the national guard's display of force in the Baltimore riots. I drank beer in the bleachers section of Fenway Park in Boston and sang "Sweet Caroline" at the top of my lungs, which, growing up as a Red Sox fan, was an experience I dreamed of for some time.

You'd be hard pressed to find a job anywhere that allows you to save 85% of the money you make without room and board included. It's the best and quickest way to earn a big chunk of dough to travel with or to quickly pay off the expenses that leak so heavily from your bucket in the first place.

72 DAYS IN HAWAII FOR LESS THAN THE COST OF A PLANE TICKET

I'd really like to highlight that cheap, unconventional travel doesn't

require much “penny pinching.” You don't have to survive on bread and sleep on a park bench to travel inexpensively. My summer in Hawaii was a perfect example of this.

In fact, I just did a couple things right in the beginning, then disregarded budgeting altogether! Only after my return did I total up all my expenses to discover just how cheap the trip actually was.

As I've mentioned previously, I spent two and a half months living on the Big Island of Hawaii for \$669. That includes the flight, housing, food, transportation costs, and every single other expense for a total of 72 days. A round-trip flight should have cost me \$726 alone.

How did I do it?

I got the big pieces right beforehand using a couple resources in this guide. Here's a quick examination of my summer on the Big Island and the three major reasons why the whole experience cost less than the plane ticket should have:

REASON #1: A CREDIT CARD AIRLINE MILEAGE BONUS

I stumbled upon the Hawaiian Airlines World Elite Mastercard that offered 35,000 airline miles if you spent \$1000 on the card. The total mileage cost of both flights, from Phoenix, AZ to Hilo, HI was 37,500 airline miles, so I had to pay an extra \$64.72 to purchase the remaining 2,500 airline miles.

Here's a breakdown of the total airfare cost:

Credit Card Yearly Fee: \$89

Airfare Tax Total: \$11.20

Checked Bags: \$50

Partial Airfare: \$64.72

TOTAL: \$209.32

SAVINGS: \$516 OFF FLIGHT

REASON #2: WORK TRADE

The second move that massively brought the cost down (and was really the whole point of going) was to WWOOF on a farm in Hawaii. In exchange for working 20 hours a week, I got my own cabin and received \$60 a week to offset the cost of food (in addition to basically limitless bananas, eggs, and a variety of other farm food).

SAVINGS: \$600 OFF FOOD; \$1000+ OFF HOUSING

REASON #3: HITCHHIKING AROUND THE ISLAND

I didn't pay for a rental car, taxi, or any other transportation cost to get around the island. For two and a half months I just walked out to a rural highway, stuck my thumb out and hitched. Not only was this free, it was a large part of the adventure. I met and conversed with over a hundred different people I would have never met otherwise. Hitchhiking is a common and socially acceptable method of transportation on the Big Island, so it wasn't as crazy or difficult as you might think.

SAVINGS: HARD TO SAY, A LOT LESS THAN RENTING A CAR FOR 72 DAYS, THOUGH. EVEN IF I RENTED A MOPED FOR \$8 A DAY, THAT'S STILL \$576 SAVED.

For those three reasons, I spent a mere \$9.29 per day. I wasn't living deliberately inexpensively either. I went to reggae concerts, bars, and a full moon jungle rave, attempted to surf, backpacked in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, went deep sea fishing, spent most Sundays at a clothing-optional hippie beach drum circle, and snorkeled all over the island.

I did it all with fun and ease on less than \$10 a day by setting a couple things up right in the beginning.

GO.

GET GOING.

The purpose of this guide was to give you the resources to explore and experience our world—to pass on an understanding of the options that exist and help lay the groundwork for your future unconventional travels. I hope we've done just that.

We've covered how to fly for free, stay for free, find work all over the globe, and find other amazing people to share your experiences with. We've discussed a bit of unconventional travel philosophy, and I broke down some examples of my own adventures. You've got all the tools you need.

Now it's your turn.

Rare is it for anyone to push you to do these things. In fact, it's often the opposite of a push to do them, but rather a pull not to. Responsibilities, obligations, fears, bills, relationships, and a thousand other little factors will all add up to try and keep you tied down. Don't think the motivation will fall in your lap one day or the stars will perfectly align for you to get out and see the world—they won't.

It's up to you to make it happen.

**TWENTY YEARS FROM NOW YOU WILL BE MORE
DISAPPOINTED BY THE THINGS YOU DIDN'T DO THAN BY THE
ONES YOU DID DO. SO THROW OFF THE BOWLINES. SAIL AWAY
FROM THE SAFE HARBOR. CATCH THE TRADE WINDS IN YOUR
SAILS. EXPLORE. DREAM. DISCOVER.**

- Mark Twain

You are the captain of your destiny. I urge you not to drift with the current, but to chart a course with a combination of the resources provided in this guide, and set sail to wherever it is you envisioned at the beginning of this guide or anywhere else you've always wanted to go.

I thought long and hard about the title for this guide. I spent hours brainstorming, trying different combinations of keywords and all sorts of other tactics. In the end, I decided on the simplest, most important part of travel, and that simply is to Go.

To Go is the most difficult, yet most essential step. To Go is to set in motion a chain of events and experiences that you could have never imagined. To Go is to tip the first domino in the line. And once that first domino falls, the rest will follow, and who knows where the dominoes that fall in succession may lead.

So...

Go drink beer in an Irish pub.

Go run with the bulls in Spain.

Go live as a local in Paris.

Go backpack throughout Southeast Asia.

Go surf the Gold Coast of Australia.

Go ride a motorcycle across China.

Go WWOOF in Hawaii.

Go learn to dance tango in Argentina.

Go experience your dream destination.

Life is short.

Go do whatever it is you've always wanted to do.

It's never been easier, and it never will be.

WELL, YOU'VE MADE IT TO THE END.

THANKS FOR READING!

In an overcrowded internet and blogosphere, where everyone is competing for attention, I deeply appreciate yours. I hope you've found this guide more than worthwhile.

If that is the case, I kindly ask that you pass the word along! Included below, are those buttons that make it remarkably easy to post a link to this guide on Facebook or Twitter. If you feel I've earned it, I'd deeply appreciate your social endorsement.



I also invite you to come join me on [The Living Theory](#) where I share a much broader range of usefulness and musings on how to do more than exist.

I'd also like to thank Haley Maurice for her patience and visual skills in designing this guide. If you'd like her help with your own project, you can email her [here](#).

If you have any questions, comments, or would like to share any travel success stories stemming from this guide (which I would absolutely love to hear!) feel free to email me at ethan@thelivingtheory.com.

Live boldly,

Ethan