

\$\$\$ Money, Money, Money \$\$\$

Save Money While Abroad

- Always ask about **student discounts**, as they are often not posted (and be sure to have your student ID with you at all times).
- Use your **mobile phone smartly** (or not at all). Check into limited international calling, texting, and data plans. If they're too expensive to use while traveling, consider using a local prepaid SIM card and free (or low-cost) internet access in public cafés to stay connected using email and social media.
- Be **smart about transportation**. Use public transportation instead of taxis whenever possible; walk or ride a bike whenever feasible.
- Check out **organized excursion packages** before signing up. Sometimes they are cheaper (or the convenience is worth the premium), but sometimes you can find much better alternative deals on your own.
- **Bargain! Haggle! Negotiate!** In countries where bargaining is the cultural norm, never pay the first price on any negotiable product or service. Once you've been there for a week or two, you'll come to know what the "real" prices are. Until then, ask others you can trust.
- **Track your expenses**. Once you see the cost of things spent on paper, you're more likely to modify your behavior.
- **Live like a local**. Ask around for places to eat and shop outside the tourist zone. Many countries have central markets that sell fresh fruits and vegetables or bulk cooking items. They also often have food stalls that offer cheap lunch options.

Managing Money While Abroad

- **Set a budget**. Before traveling abroad, create a budget for yourself in the currency of the host country. Monitor your spending as you go, especially to ensure you don't spend way over budget. As a first-timer, you may find yourself falling into the trap many do: spending more money than you realize because the currency is different and it somehow seems less like "real money." If you are, slam on the brakes. If you are under budget, assign the savings to a special item you'd like to buy but didn't think you could afford, or to an excursion you'd like to add on.
- **Use cash whenever possible**. Cash is universally accepted, and as such, it gives you greater bargaining power and frees you from having to pay any financial service charges. If using U.S. dollars, be sure to have small bills, and carry local currency in small denominations as well. Cash can also help you manage your spending.
- **Check with your bank and credit card provider** before you leave to find out if they have any added fees for use outside the United States.

- **Use ATMs wisely.** Instead of bringing one or two semesters' worth of cash with you, rely on an ATM card (have a backup in case a machine somewhere eats your card) to take out lump sums in order to minimize fees. Let your bank know beforehand of your impending travels so the bank doesn't suspect fraud and freeze your account. Also inquire about limits and fees before you leave. (If you have a Citibank, Bank of America or HSBC account, your transaction fees may be waived if you use one of their partner banks; it's worth the time to check it out.) Use ATMs inside banks or secure areas as much as possible (be on the look-out for cameras trained on you and the keypad), and refrain from using them after dark.
- **Bring preloaded cards.** Consider bringing bank debit or American Express gift cards—the ones that require you to show your passport—with you, loaded in increments of \$200. You can set up a system with a family member to transfer additional money to the cards at predetermined times. Check to make sure the cards will work in your host country.
- **Use credit cards wisely.** Although safer overall than carrying cash, using a credit card often incurs additional fees. Before you leave, therefore, find out about your credit card issuer's policies. If the fees are too high, consider signing up for Capital One, which does not charge a currency conversion fee, or any one of the credit cards that NerdWallet lists and updates on its site. Keep in mind, however, that many merchants abroad pass on their credit card fee to you by charging an additional two to four percent on top of your purchase. Be sure to ask. Don't leave home without at least two credit cards and a debit card, and make sure that you have photocopies of them, save them in a secure place online, and/or write down the numbers in case they are lost or stolen.
- **Do not keep all your cash or credit cards on you.** Store some in a safe place in your room or in various places in your luggage along with your back-up credit card or ATM card. Use a safe when traveling or when staying in a hostel. Store cash in various places on your person: most in a secure wallet or small purse tied around your neck or in a money belt. To avoid flashing cash in public places, stuff a few small bills/coins in your front pockets or a small change purse for small, quick purchases, such as food from street vendors or bus fares.
- **Set up bill payments back home.** Set up automatic online payments to your monthly or quarterly service providers, or ask a family member to make payments on your behalf. If you need to make a payment while abroad, make sure that the site you're using is completely secure and don't save your password if you're using a shared computer.
- **Make money.** Consider how you can make money—small jobs, teaching English, paid internships—not only to earn extra cash, but also to expand your in-country experience. Keep in mind that you must be scrupulous about following local labor laws and only work if your program allows it. Due to local laws many internship opportunities are unpaid. In that case, you should think about the long-term benefits; having an international internship on your résumé increases your employability upon graduation.
- **Exchange services.** Swapping skills or even sharing items can minimize costs. For example, if you're interested in learning a language but don't have the money for a course, consider swapping English lessons for local language lessons.