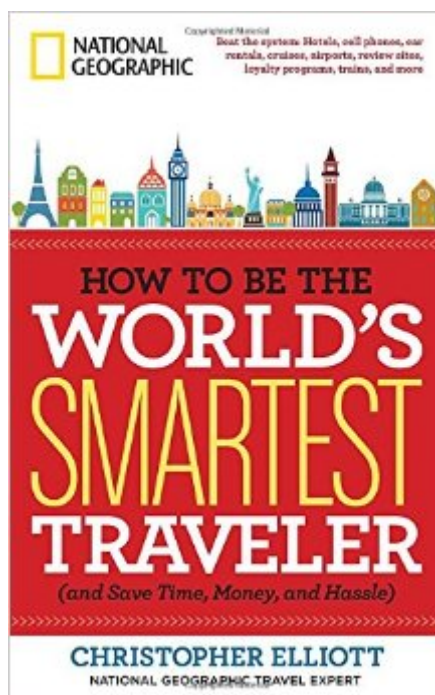


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How To Be The World's Smartest Traveler (and Save Time, Money, And Hassle)



Synopsis

Leading travel expert and *USA Today* columnist Christopher Elliott shares the smartest ways to travel in this tip-filled guide from National Geographic. Drawing on more than 20 years of experience as a consumer travel advocate, Elliott gives you the inside scoop on how to navigate the often perplexing world of travel, with detailed advice on: Airlines car rentals cruises hotels and alternative lodging the TSA and security staying connected review websites resolving complaints vacation rentals passports and visas and much more. Full of recommendations, real-life case histories, and the answers to the most common and confounding questions, this book is a must-read for anyone traveling anywhere.

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: National Geographic (March 4, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1426212739

ISBN-13: 978-1426212734

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.8 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (79 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #238,244 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #116 in [Books > Travel > Specialty Travel > Budget Travel](#) #208 in [Books > Reference > Consumer Guides](#) #576 in [Books > Travel > Reference > General](#)

Customer Reviews

As a pretty well-seasoned traveler (I travel by air about 20 times per year), I was hoping that this book would have more "insider" tips and tricks to make traveling easier. While it's a good guide to get someone started, I found that it lacks any real information that couldn't be discovered on your own after traveling a few times. The author also has a bias against loyalty programs for some reason, suggesting that you stay away from them. Sure, on average you might (read: MIGHT) pay more by remaining loyal to only 1 company, but the advantages for many people will outweigh that by a long shot. For example, free access to airport lounges (otherwise up to \$50 per visit), free checked bags (sometimes saving up to \$300 each direction), free first class upgrades, drinks... the list goes on. The same goes for hotels, rental cars, etc. Many other valuable tricks I've found over

the years were not mentioned. Such as the fact that you can buy 1-day lounge passes on eBay for a fraction of what you'd pay at the desk. Or the ability to have your airline book you a backup flight if it looks like your existing flight might get cancelled, before it actually does. I think these facts are far more useful than knowing that you can ask for a pat-down instead of going through a body scanner - a fact which is clearly posted on signs when you stand in line. 3 stars for being a good guide for a beginner, but it falls far short of making you "the world's smartest traveler".

As a moderately experienced traveler, I was looking in this book for some clever techniques that could elevate my game to the heights of (almost) "world's smartest". Indeed, the table of contents was promising, seeming to cover all the bases. So, the book looked comprehensive. And from a veteran travel writer for Nat Geo, too. It had to be good. But it wasn't. The advice in all sections is very basic. Even newbies who know how to read the fine print on their documents, and then exercise old-fashioned American common sense, won't need this book. And I do mean "American". The book is entirely and solely for US residents. You want to know about rail travel? There's a comment or two about Europe, but the section on rail is really about Amtrak. If you're not traveling in the US, the book loses much of its limited utility. It also reflects on Mr. Elliott's role as a travel ombudsman, so the best advice in the book is how to recover from abuse by airlines, hotels and other travel industry suppliers. If you've been treated badly or lost money, you might learn something about how to seek restitution. The book had promise and could still be helpful to a US-based tourist who's timid about booking a domestic vacation. International? Forget it. Anyone with more gumption and farther horizons can get better travel advice in books by Rob Sanger or Edward Hasbrouck or even off the net.

While the book is easy to read, it is also very repetitive in the advice it gives. To me, almost all of it is common sense and can be summarized in a few sentences, no matter what topic the author talks about (e.g. booking flight, hotels, rental cars, cruises): 1. Always compare prices for everything (flights, hotels, rental cars, ...) from different sources before you book. 2. Always read the fine print of any contract you sign - it's important to need to know the details. 3. There is no solution that works for everyone (e.g. not one way to book hotels). I don't travel a lot, so I was hoping to get some good advice, but I feel like I already knew ~90%. Also, there was little concrete advice. Most chapters give an somewhat broad overview over different options and end with "you have to figure out what works for you". I liked the chapter about Loyalty Programs (bottom line: they are probably not worth it), but that's not worth buying the book for.

This is a good book to pick up if you are planning a big trip or just want to save some money on a shorter weekend get-away-- or anything in between. It is full of up-to-date tips on traveling which are useful to a wide range of travelers, from budget do-it-yourselfers, to cruises, to package tours, and even gives you tips for surviving a timeshare sales event. Christopher Elliot includes many useful Do's and Don'ts sidebars that he calls "SMART" and "NOT SMART" and many examples of what to do if your plans change or something goes wrong. In his "PROBLEM SOLVED" sections, he gives real examples of people who have written to him with problems with their travel and he has helped them with a solution. How you read this book will depend if you're a glass half full or half empty person. There are so many problems (and solutions) detailed that I felt a little overwhelmed but in the end I think it's good to know what might go wrong so you can anticipate and be flexible when things happen. The book is broken into three main sections and 22 chapters.

I - Before You Go-----

1. Find the Most Reliable Travel Advice
2. Book Your Next Trip
3. Make Sure Your Papers are in Order
4. Stay Healthy and Safe
5. Find the Best Travel Insurance Policy
6. Buy the Right Luggage
7. Manage your Travel Loyalty Program

II - Getting There-----

8. Rent a Car
9. Take a Road Trip
10. Make Sense of the World of Air Travel
11. Make the Most of a Terminal Visit
12. Plan a Cruise
13. Handle TSA and Travel Security

III - On the Ground-----

14. Resolve Travel Complaints
15. Have the Best Hotel Stay Possible
16. Choose your Ideal Lodging Arrangements
17. Find the Right Vacation Rentals
18. Keep Connected
19. Troubleshoot Your Travel Tour
20. Manage Your Vacation Cash
21. Find the Best Places to Eat on the Road
22. Survive a Timeshare and Travel Club Presentation

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