



You can travel like a pro – Strategies to travel with ease

Description

"To venture causes anxiety, but not to venture is to lose one's self.... And to venture in the highest is precisely to be conscious of one's self."
Søren Kierkegaard

Learn easy ways to make your travel day fun and stress-free so you can travel like a pro.



Travel Like A Pro

Too often, I hear I wish I could travel like you do, but I can't handle how stressful it is to fly. They asked me why I was not stressed out. Thirty years ago, I would have been. I dreaded my travel days, entering them anxious and distressed. Multiple factors played a role. I hated the long lines at the airport, sitting around waiting to board, worried about making the flight, fearful about how my long legs would handle the squeezed space, the tedious wait for luggage, and, of course, to add to it all, my fear of flying. Yes, over 1,500,000 flight miles later, I am still a nervous flier.

Over time, by learning from others, I have overcome almost all those issues and learned to travel like a Pro. Part of it comes from changing my mindset and my determination not to allow my fears and anxiety to rule my life. A few decades ago, after a very turbulent flight, I swore I would never fly again. Luckily, I was on my way to my destination, and I had no choice but to fly home. I landed and had such a fantastic time. I promised myself after that to never let fear and anxiety take joy from my life. Travel feeds my soul; it is my happy place, second to my family. The exhilaration of experiencing new cultures and seeing this wondrous world was not something I was willing to give up.

Experienced travelers know the tricks of the trade and how to make flight/travel day as smooth as possible. Once I learned those same "tricks," now, I look forward to going to the airport. But they aren't tricks; everyone can take advantage of them.

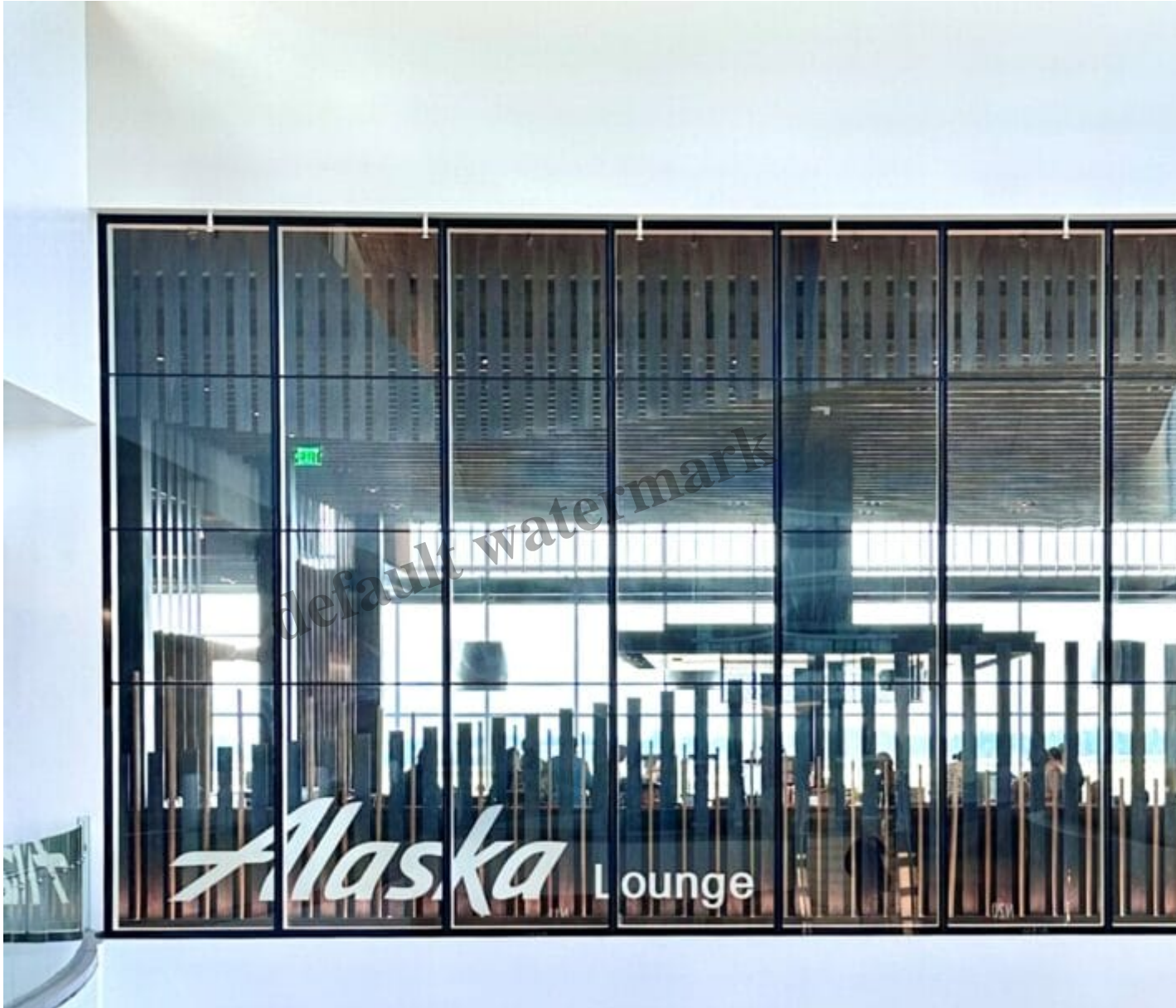
But how do I go about that?

I would see friends and colleagues speak about how traveling was a breeze. Determined to learn how to travel like a Pro, I pushed forward to learn all I could. I had a choice on how to react to it, yes, but I also could take actions that could dramatically reduce many of the stressors of travel that were difficult for me.

Those actions forever changed how I travel. I used to be the last to board; now, I am one of the first. Now I look forward to my travel day. I leave early for the airport to have fun and get spoiled in a way.

Most of these are actions anyone can take. Status with an airline or hotel is not always required.

Let's first start with an example of my average travel day.



Travel Like A Pro Alaska Lounge N Terminal

I was leaving for the East Coast for a few days before on the way to a month-long European trip. Those last few days before the trip were crazy busy. When it was time to leave for the airport, I got excited to finally relax and begin this adventure. That relaxation started at the airport as I planned to maximize all the perks and engage in some self-care. Many would say it was impossible at the airport, but it was a great way to wind down and reenergize.

Below is how it played out.

1. Arrived at the airport 2 1/2 hours before my flight. This was so I could take advantage of my

many benefits, not for fear of long lines.

2. My [Alaska Airlines](#) status gives me access to the First Class/Elite status line for faster check-in. I don't have to be in First Class to use that line. The line was short, and I breezed through check-in. I am a loyal [Alaska Airlines](#) customer and will reach my 1,000,000-mile landmark soon. It is my local airline and one of the best airlines out there. I am not an airline hopper, but I have learned over time that the little money saved by doing that is nothing compared to the benefits of staying loyal. If you fly several times a year, I suggest sticking with one airline as you could reap some sweet benefits. Since Alaska does not travel internationally at this time, my preferred airline for that is [United Airlines](#).

3. Two pieces of luggage were checked at no charge and tagged for priority handling. I am not a great packer, so I always check my luggage. You may say, "Well, I will never get that benefit because I don't fly enough to get status." This is not a benefit for only frequent fliers. If you have an [Alaska Airlines](#) credit card (most airlines do this), you and your travel party, up to 8 people, get one free checked bag. Add their annual companion pass, which is a steal of a deal if you are good at paying off your monthly balance and never paying any interest.

Next security



Travel Like a Pro

4. [TSA Precheck](#) and [CLEAR](#) through security in less than 3 minutes. There is no need to remove shoes, laptops, or separate liquids. I have never waited for more than 10 minutes in this line, and it is usually less than 5 minutes. There is an application process, and each is a separate option. We got our TSA Precheck via [Global Entry](#). CLEAR is an added option to expedite the process even more. All three can be free if you have a credit card geared toward travel.

Lounge time

5. Visited a Chase Sapphire Card Priority Pass restaurant. Used my allowance for airplane snacks, water, and a breakfast sandwich. Zero cost. This is just for having the card; no elite status is needed. I can also access specific airport lounges, but this restaurant was closest to my gate. They have a great beer collection, too. If using a lounge, there is usually unlimited free food and alcohol to enjoy while passing the time before your flight. We use this benefit all over the world. Some of the lounges have been incredible, with full meals and an open bar. As a result, the money it has saved us is enormous, and it is a fun way to spend time at the airport. We arrive at the airport sometimes four hours before a

flight to lounge hop. Check out our page, [Best Credit Cards for Travel](#).



Travel Like a Pro

6. With my [Alaska Airlines](#) status, I have four free passes to their airport lounges. After stopping by the Chase Priority Pass restaurant to get snacks and water for the plane, I headed to the Alaska Airlines lounge. These are some of the best lounges in the market. I enjoyed a hand-crafted cappuccino, champagne, a cocktail (it was a rough week), and some excellent food at no cost. I picked up some more snacks for the road because why not, it was going to be a long trip.

Boarding time

7. At the gate, I boarded Priority Group A. By doing so, I was assured I had overhead space for my carry-on. They ran out of overhead before boarding was completed, forcing about a dozen people to check their bags. This is not just available with status; it is also a benefit if you have an [Alaska Airlines](#) credit card.



Travel Like a Pro

8. **I enjoyed exit row seating at no cost** (I didn't get my free upgrade to First Class this time, but I get it often), which makes all the difference when you are tall. Due to my airline's elite status, I can reserve my seats months before the flight. Before I book, I make sure the seats are available. Non-elite fliers can reserve roomier seats for a cost, which makes your flight much more comfortable for those who value it.

In the air

9. **An in-flight cocktail is complimentary.** If I chose premium seating, free with my elite status, I could have cocktails throughout the flight if I wished. I prefer exit seating, though.

10. **The flight attendant hands me a chocolate bar to thank me for my loyalty.**

On the ground

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AdobeStock Travel Like a Pro

11. luggage was the first on the carousel. This is due to priority tagging. I am on the road faster and to my destination.

12. I arrived at the [Avis](#) with a space number sent to me via the app when I landed and went straight to my rental car — no line to stand in. Keys are in the car, and I get an exit pass on my phone, so I do not have to pull out my driver's license. I scan the barcode (at larger U.S. locations), and away I go. This is a free service from Avis for their Avis Preferred customers; anyone can become an Avis Preferred customer. Avis Plus is free, with even more added benefits like free upgrades if you have a CLEAR membership.



Travel like a Pro Hilton Malta

13. I am loyal to [Hilton](#) properties. As a result of my elite status, I received a nice room upgrade for free and a daily beverage and food allowance of \$16 each for two people to use at my discretion. In Europe, they offer a full breakfast for two at no cost. Certain credit cards, including some Hilton brand cards, provide free status with no minimum yearly stays.

My elite status sometimes offers complimentary spa and/or gym access, welcome treats in the room, and discounts on hotel services.

14. **Bonus miles on every trip as a result of Elite status.** They add up quickly that way. We recently purchased free business-class seats on Japan Airlines (well, we did pay less than \$100 in taxes). The business class ticket was over \$3700 one way. We used 60,000 miles for a ticket.

All the above are at no additional cost except for [CLEAR](#). [TSA Precheck](#) is free with my credit card, and CLEAR is discounted with my airline mileage plan. If you have an American Express, Platinum CLEAR is free.

Does it make sense now?



Ryan enjoying champagne and food at British Airways Lounge IAD.

Now you can see why I can say honestly; it makes it fun to go through the airport and something I look forward to. It starts my travels on a relaxed note every time. I can hang out in an airport lounge when things go wrong, like delays or canceled flights. I often have an easier time rebooking flights due to my elite status and because I always book directly with the airline. These are fundamental elements for those who travel like the pros.

Why does this make a difference? It is sometimes simply about feeling like you are appreciated. Loyalty does pay, and it is their way of thanking you for your business. We talk about this in our article on [Travel Brand Loyalty](#). Check the article out for more info. Everyone can gain this if they travel regularly and stick to a specific airline, hotel, and rental car company. Certain credit cards provide status upfront for hotel chains and airlines as well. You don't even have to earn it by a set number of flights or stay a minimum number of nights.

You have options to keep your travel day relaxed and fun



Travel Like a Pro United Business Class

Keeping within a reasonable budget is essential to travel as much as we do. We pay our way or use our points for travel. We work hard to keep our costs down. When traveling, anything that can make the experience more fun and relaxed is invaluable. When, in the end, it saves us money, it is a huge bonus.

That said, we prefer nicer hotels and no more than one connecting flight. When we have the opportunity, we use miles for international business-class upgrades. You can fly and travel in style and be budget-minded. Travel brand loyalty is one big reason that it is possible. One of the ways to travel like a pro.

A great example of the value of these perks is that over the last four years, since we have had a [Chase Sapphire Reserved credit card](#), we have saved over \$24,000 in free hotel stays with breakfast included using our reward points. This comes from using the card for all purchases of any kind: gas, Costco, groceries, etc. The key is always to pay off the entire balance each month so you never pay interest. Once you start paying interest, the benefit outweighs what you pay in interest. We could never have afforded those trips if it hadn't been for the rewards from the card. It is one of the best first steps you can take to start enjoying free travel and get some travel day perks as well.

We have written several articles to help you negotiate these options and plan for other essential elements of the trip

[Best Credit Cards for Travel in 2024](#)

[Tired of Long TSA Airport security lines? Here is how to avoid them](#)

[Travel Brand Loyalty – How it Benefits YOU!](#)

[Want to travel for free? Let us show you how](#)

[The Best Travel Apps for the Savvy Traveler](#)

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Can things still go wrong even when you travel like a pro?



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They do, but loyalty gives you a lot more ability to reduce the implications of that. While others interact with their travel agents to find alternatives, my airline works to find the best and fastest solution. Sometimes, it is simply weather impacting delays, but my hotel loyalty has easily given me a room when needed. Free checked luggage saves money. Having [CLEAR](#) assures me I won't be late for my flight. Early boarding ensures I won't be forced to check my carry-on.

Free entry into airport lounges or restaurants saves money on food and drinks I would otherwise purchase. The lounge is a lovely place to pass the time waiting for your flight, especially if it is delayed. Airline status can provide better seating, leading to added comfort, faster deplaning to make connections, and arriving in better spirits. There are also some of those fun perks on the flight. I get on the road quickly with my rental car from [Avis](#) since I bypass the line. Of course, those frequent First Class upgrades are super sweet!

Now it's your turn to travel like a Pro

Taking a few of these suggestions can take you from dread to excited anticipation. If you could care less about any of these perks, good for you because you are one of the rare ones. I hear too often from people that they wish they could travel like you. Their stress is too high during travel day, and they can't enjoy the trip. That motivated me to write this to explain why I am not stressed and look forward to heading out on a new adventure. But more importantly, to help our readers achieve the same.

Final Thoughts



Travel Like a Pro Positano, Amalfi Coast, Italy

There is an incredible and fascinating world out there. If the only thing keeping you from exploring the world is how miserable you find the travel days, you take the bull by the horns and change the course of future travel. Imagine wanting to get to the airport early to enjoy your time there because it is fun. Reduce stress, feel valued, and save money. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose! Travel like a pro; it is within your reach.

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To empower you as a consumer, we suggest you read our [blog post](#) on the importance of travel insurance and how to get the best coverage from top-rated companies for an affordable price.

[MedjetAssist](#)

Medical transport back home from anywhere in the world

They are the premier global air medical transport. One caveat to travel insurance is that medical evacuation usually gets you to the closest facility to care for you. Medjet gets you back to the U.S. to the hospital of your choice once you are stable enough to fly. They cover COVID-related transport as well.

[Medjet](#) carries its own policies. These policies are only for transport and do not cover other aspects of travel insurance. They have individual trip policies starting at \$99 and annual policies for around \$300. Most of their policies limit the age to 74 and younger. Prices are not based on age below that.

To learn more about how Medical Evacuation membership with Medjet Assist works, check out our [blog post](#) for a more detailed review.

[Expedia.com](#)

Hotels, home rentals, BNBs, flights, and other transportation & tours

[Expedia](#) is a US-based company whose mission is to power global travel for everyone and everywhere. Whether planning a family vacation, booking for business, or organizing the trip of a lifetime, they are a fantastic resource. Wanderers Compass focuses on independent travel, and using sites like [Expedia](#) makes that possible. Every aspect of travel you need, from airfare, accommodations, rental car, and cruises to activities to do at your destination, can be booked on [Expedia](#).

[Booking.com](#)

Hotels, Home rentals, BNBs, Flights, and other Transportation & Tours

[Booking.com](#) connects millions of travelers to memorable experiences, various transportation options, and incredible places to stay – from homes to hotels and much more. It is one of the world's largest travel marketplaces for established brands and entrepreneurs of all sizes.

We always check Expedia and Booking.com to verify prices. At times, one is sold out of rooms while another at the same place has rooms. We also often find some European hotels, especially smaller ones, on Booking.com but not on Expedia. It could be they are a Europe-based company. Try both before booking accommodations.

[Vacation Rental By Owner \(VRBO\)](#)

Are you traveling with a family or having an extended stay at your destination?

With over 2 million bookable vacation rentals, [VRBO](#) connects homeowners with families and vacationers looking for something more than a hotel for their trip. The [VRBO](#) community offers families or groups various rental property types such as condos, cabins, lake rentals, beach houses, etc.

[VRBO](#) is now under the Expedia group's ownership, which many were worried about, but it hasn't panned out to be a concern. It is a massive network with access to all lodging forms should issues arise. Joelle has used VRBO for many years with her family and has had no problems with it.

[Viator](#)

As the leading marketplace for travel experiences, [Viator](#) believes that making memories is what travel is all about. And with 300,000+ experiences to explore—everything from simple tours to extreme adventures (and all the niche, interesting stuff in between)—making memories that will last a lifetime has never been easier.

With industry-leading flexibility and last-minute availability, it's never too late to make any day extraordinary. This one site has it all and has experiences throughout the world. We use them often during our travels, especially for food tours. We especially take the time to read the reviews provided.

[Amazon.com](#)

An excellent source for travel essentials and guides

We now have our own Amazon Storefront with all our favorite travel accessories and gear in one place. Check out our travel store at the link below.

[Wanderers Compass Amazon Storefront](#)

Amazon is one of the most comprehensive online shopping sources in the world. Teams worldwide provide lower prices, better selection, and rapid delivery on behalf of customers. They offer a vast inventory, and their 1.7 million small and medium businesses worldwide selling on Amazon.com offer extensive options to customers.

We buy most of our travel books, accessories, and luggage from Amazon. We have ordered up to two days before travel and get what we need.

[HYDAWAY](#)

This is not your ordinary drinkware company. The **HYDAWAY** difference is what their products do when you're not using them. Practical and portable, HYDAWAY doesn't take up unnecessary space in your already-packed life or pile up in landfills. We all know that trying to pack light while being environmentally conscious can be difficult. Having the right items can make a world of difference.

[HYDAWAY](#) provides that.

We have used their collapsible water bottle, carrying case for the water bottle, and collapsible insulated

drink tumbler. They are all lightweight and durable. A conservation-focused product you can be proud to buy.

Use our Promo Code. WANCOM15, at checkout for 15% off your Hydaway order

Welcome Pick-ups **(Airport and sightseeing service)**

A global leader in ground transportation for travelers. They help hundreds of companies worldwide enhance their services and boost their revenue with our 5-star ride experiences and hassle-free automation.

Founded in 2015 in Athens, Greece, [Welcome Pick-ups](#) goes above and beyond the standard transfer service as the first company to deliver a holistic, in-destination travel experience. From the moment a traveler arrives at a new destination until they return home, Welcome accommodates all their travel needs (transfers, travel products, things to do, information) as the easiest, friendliest, and most personalized solution.

PhotoAiD

Do you feel like you are wasting time visiting an on-site photographer only to be embarrassed by the photo? Would you like control of the final product? Get the perfect VISA or passport photo online with PhotoAiD.

When traveling, you often need to apply for official documents such as a passport, ID, and different kinds of licenses or cards. Those applications require a picture that must meet specific conditions to be accepted, depending on the country. Now, it is possible to take this picture at home without the help of a professional photographer. PhotoAiD allows you to take the perfect biometric photo you approve without leaving home.

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jmachiaoutlook-com

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