

How to travel well in a group

By Robert Haru Fisher



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I had an experienced traveler come up to me in the lobby of Tokyo's best western-style hotel to ask "Bob, you lived in Tokyo, I know. How do I get a taxi here?" And I had to remind her that the man in uniform at the front door would summon a cab, just as his counterpart would do at any major hotel in the world.

But you should think for yourself when it comes to your own special interests, even if you travel with a group and have nearly everything decided for you. If you have a food allergy, for instance, don't rely only on the tour director to handle the matter for you. Have your allergy warning printed up on a card (preferably in the language of your destination) and show it yourself to the headwaiter before you are seated. Ask to see the chef, enlist your tour director and/or guide to help you interview the chef about your allergy. I have done this all my adult life and despite constant travel, have only rarely been the victim of some undeclared allergen in my food. You can get warning cards (and for diabetes and other medical conditions) at [Select Wisely](#) or make your own.

In case of schedule delays, always have some reading matter or portable game on hand, and if the delay is at a major airport, consider joining an airline lounge on the spot (most airlines have one-day memberships as well as annual fee deals). It's nicer to hang out in one of the clubs than trying to rest sitting on the floor in the ticketing area. If you travel a lot, you may want to join up with [Priority Pass](#), which gets you into more than 600 airline clubs around the world.

Being stressed out is something one never expects, but if it happens while you're on a group tour, consider taking a day or half day off the schedule. Tell your group leader or guide and take the time to use your hotel spa or pool, or just rest, maybe with room service. I was recently with a group of 33 on a Nile Cruise and noticed that a few people did drop out of our fairly rigorous schedule from time to time. (We averaged from two to seven miles a day of walking, according to my pedometer.)

When you travel in a group, if you are like me, you may sometimes leave your brains behind. That is, you leave a lot of decisions to the group leader.



Photo by Vaida Tamošauskait, Unsplash.com

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If you're older than the average of your group, you may feel compelled to keep up with the younger members, and it's nice when you get compliments on doing so. But learn to compromise and not overdo the exercise you may be getting. And trust your common sense. At Abu Simbel, our guide wanted us to follow him via a "short cut" to the temples, and so we scrambled off the beautifully paved walkway beside the lake's edge, toiling up a steep incline on a rocky path and down, saving perhaps 5 or 10 minutes. I returned on the paved route, finding it much more pleasant and safe, and looking back, realized I would have had a more beautiful prospect on arriving at the temples than the rocky road we had taken to get there afforded. So sometimes the easier route is the best. (There's a reason they paved the road along the lake's edge and not up and over the hilltop, after all.) [👉](#)

For more information on the resources mentioned, click on the links below.

- [Select Wisely](#)
- [Priority Pass](#)