Travel Paragraphs

**Top 10 Tips for Having a Perfect, Stress-Free Vacation**

The whole point of a vacation is to relax and relieve stress, but all too often, you need a vacation *after* your vacation to recover from your time off. Here are ten tips to make your vacation the stress-buster it really should be.

**10. Know Why Vacations Are So Stressful**

If you only take a vacation once in a while, it puts a lot of pressure on that time period for everything to be perfect. Try taking breaks every quarter or twice a year and keep your vacation itinerary flexible [so you don’t end up stressing out on your vacation](http://lifehacker.com/why-vacations-can-cause-more-stress-than-they-alleviate-1208854034).

**9. Take a 10-Day Vacation**

A three-day getaway is nice and a week-long one is quite common, but 10 could be [the magic vacation number](http://lifehacker.com/10-days-is-the-magic-vacation-number-heres-why-1256679545). You’ve got enough time to travel to where you’re going, maybe with multiple stops, and you’re away long enough that you’re forced to off-load your duties at work.

**8. Travel with Your Kids While Keeping Everyone Happy (Somehow)**

Traveling with kids adds unique challenges, especially when you have to schedule around nap and feeding times. Don’t let having young kids (or kids of any age) keep you from traveling, though. All you need is some [extra planning and preparation](http://lifehacker.com/how-to-travel-with-your-kids-and-keep-everyone-happy-1695901835) for a smooth trip. Even flying with kids [doesn’t have to be a nightmare](http://lifehacker.com/how-can-i-make-traveling-with-kids-less-of-a-nightmare-5993628), especially if you [travel on a kid-friendly airline](http://lifehacker.com/the-best-airlines-for-traveling-with-children-1661634377).

**7. Let Someone Else Plan Your Trip**

Most of us go the DIY route when booking our trips, but a travel agent can save you time and stress [when you have a complex vacation planned](http://lifehacker.com/why-you-might-actually-want-to-use-a-travel-agent-1708297307), such as traveling with a group or you have health issues that need to be accommodated. You can also save a lot of money by using a travel agent [if you’re planning an international trip](http://lifehacker.com/your-time-vs-your-money-finding-the-sweet-spot-when-b-5931190).

**6. Head to an Underrated Vacation Destination**

If you like crowds and long lines, visit a popular destination in prime tourist season. Otherwise, you might enjoy your vacation more if you head somewhere less popular, like one of [these suggestions from Lifehacker readers](http://lifehacker.com/the-best-most-underrated-vacation-destinations-1599392001), or [take a staycation](http://blogs.consumerreports.org/money/2009/05/tips-for-the-best-staycation-ever.html). Similarly, the [summer might not be the best time for a vacation](http://lifehacker.com/why-summer-might-not-be-the-best-time-for-a-vacation-1514881112), depending on where you go. (I’m looking at you, Disney World!)

**5. Streamline Your Vacation Planning**

Sometimes vacations are stressful just because you have to make a ton of decisions and coordinate with other people. We’re [fans of TripIt](http://lifehacker.com/tripit-organizes-your-travel-itinerary-automatically-vi-300833) for automatically organizing our travel plans in one place, but there are lots of [other travel planning apps](http://lifehacker.com/five-best-travel-planning-apps-1470002139) that can simplify your plans. You can plan a trip itinerary [using your own custom Google Map](http://lifehacker.com/how-to-plan-a-trip-itinerary-using-custom-google-maps-1440584988) or [this simple spreadsheet](http://lifehacker.com/organize-and-share-your-vacation-with-this-travel-plann-1684919711) too.

**4. Set Guidelines When Traveling with a Group of Friends**

Traveling with friends is a lot of fun, but it can also drive you crazy, since you’ll be together constantly and probably won’t agree on everything all the time. Keep your cool by [making sure everyone is on the same page](http://lifehacker.com/how-to-travel-with-a-group-of-friends-and-not-lose-you-1451652555) when it comes to accommodations and planned activities.

**3. Work on Vacation (Without Going Crazy)**

Sometimes you have to take work with you on vacation, it can’t be helped. If that’s the case, try [setting aside small blocks of time that you’ll use to catch up on work](http://lifehacker.com/how-to-work-while-on-vacation-without-going-crazy-692360328) and save the rest of the time for enjoying your vacation.

**2. But Don’t Let Work Ruin Your Vacation Time**

If you don’t really have to work while on vacation, though, don’t. You can force yourself not to get sucked into work mode with a [vacation email address](http://lifehacker.com/set-up-a-vacation-email-address-to-avoid-work-while-you-1619583424). [Schedule your vacation well in advance](http://lifehacker.com/how-to-take-a-vacation-without-stressing-about-work-1711674534) and block those dates as “out of office” so you avoid having regular work conflicting with your vacation desires. If the thought of going back to work stresses you out while you’re on vacation (or before you leave), [plan to hit the ground running when you return](http://lifehacker.com/how-can-i-hit-the-ground-running-when-i-return-from-vac-5908180) with a few simple tricks like cleaning your home and desk before you leave and [starting your day a little earlier so you have some alone time](http://lifehacker.com/how-to-get-back-into-work-or-study-mode-after-a-long-br-5837355).

**1. Take a Vacation, Already**

Taking a vacation [shouldn’t make you feel guilty](http://lifehacker.com/break-your-cycle-of-stress-with-guilt-free-vacations-5571004). [Too many of us don’t use our vacation time](http://lifehacker.com/stop-leaving-vacation-time-on-the-table-5741146), perhaps thinking that we look like we’re harder workers when we don’t go on vacation. That’s silly. [Go relax](http://lifehacker.com/how-you-can-learn-to-finally-really-relax-1548045887). Here’s our [start-to-finish guide to a perfect, stress-free vacation](http://lifehacker.com/the-start-to-finish-guide-to-a-perfect-stress-free-vac-5923155).

A message from the rural Midwest: Because of misunderstandings that frequently develop when Easterners and Californians cross states such as Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Michigan Missouri, Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Those states' Tourism Councils have adopted a set of information guidelines. In an effort to help outsiders understand the Midwest, the following list will be handed to each driver entering the state:

That farm boy standing next to the feed bin did more work before breakfast than you do all week at the gym.

It's called a 'gravel road.' No matter how slow you drive, you're going to get dust on your Navigator. I have a four wheel drive because I need it. Drive it or get it out of the way.

We all started hunting and fishing when we were seven years old. Yeah, we saw Bambi. We got over it.

Any references to "corn fed" when talking about our women will get you whipped... by our women.

Go ahead and bring your $600 Orvis Fly Rod. Don't cry to us if a flathead catfish breaks it off at the handle. We have a name for those little trout you fish for...bait.

Pull your pants up. You look like an idiot.

If that cell phone rings while a bunch of mallards are making their final approach, we will shoot it.! You might hope you don't have it up to your ear at the time.

That's right. Whiskey is only two bucks. We can buy a fifth for what you paid in the airport for one drink.

No, there's no "Vegetarian Special" on the menu. Order steak. Order it rare. Or, you can order the Chef's Salad and pick off the two pounds of ham and turkey.

You bring Coke into my house, it better be brown, wet, and served over ice.

So you have a sixty-thousand dollar car you drive on weekends. We're real impressed. We have quarter of a million dollar combines that we use two weeks

a year.

Let's get this straight. We have one stoplight in town. We stop when it's red. We may even stop when it's yellow

Our women hunt, fish, and drive trucks--because they want to. So, you're a feminist. Isn't that cute.

Yeah, we eat catfish. Carp, too--and turtle. You really want sushi and caviar? It's available at the bait shop.

They are pigs. That's what they smell like. Get over it. Don't like it? Interstates 70, 80, &90 go two ways-­ Interstates 29, 35, &69 go the other two. Pick one and use it accordingly.

The "Opener" refers to the first day of deer season. It's a religious holiday. You can get breakfast at the church.

So every person in every pickup waves. It's called being friendly. Understand the concept?

Yeah, we have golf courses. Don't hit in the water hazard. It spooks the fish.

That Highway Patrol Officer that just pulled you over for driving like an idiot...his name is "Sir"...no matter how old he is.

Now, enjoy your visit.

**Excerpts from “A Year in Provence”**

1. The final "bon appétit" died away and a companionable near-silence descended on the restaurant as the food received its due attention. While we ate, my wife and I thought of previous New Year's Days, most of them spent under impenetrable cloud in England. It was hard to associate the sunshine and dense blue sky outside with the first of January but, as everyone kept telling us, it was quite normal. After all, we were in Provence.
2. We had been here often before as tourists, desperate for our annual ration of two or three weeks of true heat and sharp light. Always when we left, with peeling noses and regret, we promised ourselves that one day we would live here. We had talked about it during the long gray winters and the damp green summers, looked with an addict's longing at photographs of village markets and vineyards, dreamed of being woken up by the sun slanting through the bedroom window. And now, somewhat to our surprise, we had done it. We had committed ourselves. We had bought a house, taken French lessons, said our good-byes, shipped over our two dogs, and become foreigners.
3. In the end, it had happened quickly-almost impulsively-because of the house. We saw it one afternoon and had mentally moved in by dinner. It was set above the country road that runs between the two medieval hill villages of Ménerbes and Bonnieux, at the end of a dirt track through cherry trees and vines. It was a mas, or farmhouse, built from local stone which two hundred years of wind and sun had weathered to a color somewhere between pale honey and pale gray. It had started life in the eighteenth century as one room and, in the haphazard manner of agricultural buildings, had spread to accommodate children, grandmothers, goats, and farm implements until it had become an irregular three-story house.
4. Everything about the house was solid. The spiral staircase which rose from the wine cave to the top floor was cut from massive slabs of stone. The walls, some of them a meter thick, were built to keep out the winds of the Mistral which, they say, can blow the ears off a donkey. Attached to the back of the house was an enclosed courtyard, and beyond that a bleached white stone swimming pool. There were three wells, there were established shade trees and slim green cypresses, hedges of rosemary, a giant almond tree. In the afternoon sun, with the wooden shutters half-closed like sleepy eyelids, it was irresistible.
5. It was also immune, as much as any house could be, from the creeping horrors of property development. The French have a weakness for erecting jolies villas wherever building regulations permit, and sometimes where they don't, particularly in areas of hitherto unspoiled and beautiful countryside. We had seen them in a ghastly rash around the old market town of Apt, boxes made from that special kind of livid pink cement which remains livid no matter what the weather may throw at it. Very few areas of rural France are safe unless they have been officially protected, and one of the great attractions of this house was that it sat within the boundaries of a national park, sacred to the French heritage and out of bounds to concrete mixers.
6. The Lubéron Mountains rise up immediately behind the house to a high point of nearly 3,500 feet and run in deep folds for about forty miles from west to east. Cedars and pines and scrub oak keep them perpetually green and provide cover for boar, rabbits, and game birds. Wildflowers, thyme, lavender, and mushrooms grow between the rocks and under the trees, and from the summit on a clear day the view is of the Basses-Alpes on one side and the Mediterranean on the other. For most of the year, it is possible to walk for eight or nine hours without seeing a car or a human being. It is a 247,000-acre extension of the back garden, a paradise for the dogs and a permanent barricade against assault from the rear by unforeseen neighbors.
7. Neighbors, we have found, take on an importance in the country that they don't begin to have in cities. You can live for years in an apartment in London or New York and barely speak to the people who live six inches away from you on the other side of a wall. In the country, separated from the next house though you may be by hundreds of yards, your neighbors are part of your life, and you are part of theirs. If you happen to be foreign and therefore slightly exotic, you are inspected with more than usual interest. And if, in addition, you inherit a long-standing and delicate agricultural arrangement, you are quickly made aware that your attitudes and decisions have a direct effect on another family's well-being.
8. We had been introduced to our new neighbors by the couple from whom we bought the house, over a five-hour dinner marked by a tremendous goodwill on all sides and an almost total lack of comprehension on our part. The language spoken was French, but it was not the French we had studied in textbooks and heard on cassettes; it was a rich, soupy patois, emanating from somewhere at the back of the throat and passing through a scrambling process in the nasal passages before coming out as speech.
9. Half-familiar sounds could be dimly recognized as words through the swirls and eddies of Provençal: demain became demang, vin became vang, maison became mesong. That by itself would not have been a problem had the words been spoken at normal conversational speed and without further embroidery, but they were delivered like bullets from a machine gun, often with an extra vowel tacked on to the end for good luck. Thus, an offer of more bread-page-one stuff in French for beginners-emerged as a single twanging question. Encoredupanga?
10. Fortunately for us, the good humor and niceness of our neighbors were apparent even if what they were saying was a mystery. Henriette was a brown, pretty woman with a permanent smile and a sprinter's enthusiasm for reaching the finish line of each sentence in record time. Her husband, Faustin-or Faustang, as we thought his name was spelled for many weeks-was large and gentle, unhurried in his movements and relatively slow with his words. He had been born in the valley, he had spent his life in the valley, and he would die in the valley. His father, Pépé André, who lived next to him, had shot his last boar at the age of eighty and had given up hunting to take up the bicycle. Twice a week he would pedal to the village for his groceries and his gossip. They seemed to be a contented family.
11. They had, however, a concern about us, not only as neighbors but as prospective partners, and, through the fumes of marc and black tobacco and the even thicker fog of the accent, we eventually got to the bottom of it.
12. Most of the six acres of land we had bought with the house was planted with vines, and these had been looked after for years under the traditional system of métayage: the owner of the land pays the capital costs of new vine stock and fertilizer, while the farmer does the work of spraying, cropping, and pruning. At the end of the season, the farmer takes two-thirds of the profits and the owner one-third. If the property changes hands, the arrangement comes up for review, and there was Faustin's concern.
13. It was well known that many of the properties in the Lubéron were bought as résidences secondaires, used for holidays and amusement, their good agricultural land turned into elaborately planted gardens. There were even cases of the ultimate blasphemy, when vines had been grubbed up to make way for tennis courts. Tennis courts! Faustin shrugged with disbelief, shoulders and eyebrows going up in unison as he contemplated the extraordinary idea of exchanging precious vines for the curious pleasures of chasing a little ball around in the heat.

Source: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/109800/a-year-in-provence-by-peter-mayle/9780679731146/excerpt>

**Excerpts from Rick Steve’s Travel Article about Norway**

1. The pleasant fjord town of Balestrand (pop. 2,000) has a long history of hosting tourists, thanks to its landmark Kviknes Hotel. But it also feels real and lived-in, making Balestrand a nice mix of cuteness and convenience. The town is near, but not too near, the Norway in a Nutshell bustle across the fjord — and yet it's an easy express-boat trip away if you'd like to dive into the Nuttiness. In short, consider Balestrand a worthwhile detour from the typical fjord visit — allowing you to dig deeper into the Sognefjord, just like the glaciers did during the last ice age.
2. Most travelers arrive in Balestrand on the express boat from Bergen or Flåm. The tidy harbor area has a tourist information office, two grocery stores, a couple of galleries, a town history museum, and a small aquarium devoted to marine life found in the fjord. The historic wooden Kviknes Hotel and its ugly modern annex dominate Balestrand's waterfront.
3. Warning: Balestrand pretty much shuts down from mid-September through mid-May — when most of its activities, sights, hotels, and restaurants are likely closed. But even during tourist season, Balestrand is quiet. How quiet? The police station closes on weekends. And it's tiny — from the harbor to the Balestrand Hotel is a five-minute stroll, and you can walk from the aquarium to Kviknes Hotel in less than that.
4. Balestrand became accessible to the wider world in 1858 when an activist minister (from the church across the fjord from town) brought in the first steamer service. That put Balestrand on the Grand Tour map of the Romantic Age. Even the German Kaiser chose to summer here. Today, people from around the world come here to feel the grandeur of the fjord country and connect with the essence of Norway.
5. One night is enough to get a taste of Balestrand. But with two nights you can relax and consider some day trips: Cruise up the nearby Fjærlandsfjord for a peek at a distant tongue of the ever-less-mighty Jostedal Glacier, or head across the Sognefjord to the beautiful Hopperstad Stave Church in Vik.
6. My top tip for your time in the town itself is to stroll the (short) length of its tiny harbor. Start at the aquarium, worth visiting for a look at marine life in the Sognefjord. Across the street, at The Viking Ship shack, a German woman named Carola sells German sausages with an evangelical zeal. A couple of doors down, the Spindelvev ("Spider's Web") shop sells handicrafts made by people with physical and mental disabilities. A local home for the disabled was closed in the 1980s, but many of its former residents stayed in Balestrand because the government gave them pensions and houses in town.
7. Balestrand also has outdoor activities for everyone, from dreamy fjordside strolls and strenuous mountain hikes to wildly scenic bike rides. For dinner, splurge on the memorable *smörgåsbord*-style *store koldt bord* dinner in the Kviknes Hotel dining room, then sip coffee from its balcony as you watch the sun set (or not) over the fjord.

Source: https://www.ricksteves.com/watch-read-listen/read/articles/fjordside-balestrand