

Distant hills in view, a glass of wine and someone else to drive...you may never want to go home. Enjoy each moment you don't have to make a decision when you go by coach. Just take this Inside Scoop with you.

travel: delighting in the spirit of adventure • a vacation from home to explore places that are not your home • knowing life is different, knowing this is a joy of travel • enjoying the journey, not just the destination • a privilege best used with patience, humour and curiosity • fun • coming home with great tales •

Tips

Be prompt for departures—punctuality is necessary for the next tour stop and a courtesy to fellow travellers. Your coach will stop often, perhaps every 2hrs to allow walk-off time and washroom breaks (some require you to pay a few coins). While places are equipped for a rush, tuck a tissue in your pocket in the rare case of a run on toilet tissue.

Your Counsellor

Our knowledge and experience help turn dreams into first-rate vacations. Ask your counsellor about any details, including:

- booking after tour stays
- visas and documentation
- security, health & weather considerations.

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Inside Scoop: Touring by COACH

Know before you go: travel isn't just your destination, it's also the journey

Touring by coach is truly one of those best-kept secrets, for any age group. Yes you might have seen pictures of seniors getting on a bus and thought that's not your speed. But if you think coach tours are in that realm, take a wild guess what restaurant chain topped favourites in a survey? The Hard Rock Café, definitely not Sunday dinner at the grandparents. Besides being cost-effective, a huge benefit is letting others take care of the details. Admit it—isn't it terrific knowing someone else will take care of lodging and navigate traffic? Worry-free travel surely has benefits...

Since it might take time to slow down or wind back up for those constant decisions at home, a coach tour could be just what the doctor ordered. **Tip:** ask your counsellor about extending your stay before and/or after your tour.

- Check your library for a wealth of info such as what to expect wherever you're going or surf the internet. Whether tropical zones or the far north, pack appropriate protective gear such as hats and sunglasses.
- For cell phone use, check with your provider. Internet service is usually available at hotels, some cafes and tourist areas.
- Travel with the assurance that your family can reach you in an emergency; give them your itinerary/contact numbers.
- Many attractions are included: in some locations you may be able to book local tours such as a relaxing river barge cruise or a cabaret night. Book optional tours before you go so you're assured a spot and spend less while travelling. Many options now exist because some like all their time booked while some like lots of free time (called "the pace" of the tour).
- Keep the itinerary, hotel names and tour contact information handy; if you get separated from a tour you'll be able to connect up. If your coach will be crossing borders, have your passport ready for presentation.

Above all, travel with a positive attitude—having patience and a spirit of adventure will carry you through any experience!

Pack strategically

Your pre-paid costs usually include baggage handling/transportation, some meals and special events/dinners, accommodation and some admission to attractions. Depending on your coach and itinerary, a washroom and two doors (easier/faster exits and boarding) might be provided. When your tour moves to a new hotel, your checked bag is conveniently loaded on and off your coach. You might either be instructed to bring your bag to the coach or leave your bag outside your room by a specific time, such as before breakfast starts.

Due to limited space, most operators allow **1 suitcase per person** no bigger than 30inx18inx10in (76cmx46cmx25cm) weighing no more than 23kg (the limit of most airlines). You can also bring **1 piece of hand luggage**, such as a tote, small enough to take on the coach (not with telescopic handles).

The world is overrun with black bags: especially spotting yours quickly at airports so tie on coloured tape or ribbon. Put your name outside and inside, remove old tags. In hand luggage, pack travel documents (hotel vouchers, insurance, passports), valuables such as jewellery and over-the-counter/prescription drugs in original containers. Have a medical condition? Bring documentation and talk to your counsellor about Maritime Travel cancellation/interruption and medical insurance. If you are ill and must return early, repatriation is costly. Whether insurance takes care of lost luggage or a hospital stay, it's also peace of mind.

If you travel by plane, pack liquids/lotions/gels in checked bags (inside plastic bags)—due to carry-on restrictions, the maximum size container is 100ml(3.4oz). All must fit in 1 clear/resealable plastic bag of no more than 1 litre. Items regular travellers pack: pens/notebook, hand wipes, munchies (no fruit, meat or veg over borders). Permitted in carry-on: cell phones, laptops, umbrellas, canes and disposable razors. The Canadian Air Transport Security Authority controls security; see www.catsa.gc.ca/home and check your airline for restrictions.

Your Airline

Sign up online for your airline(s) email/text flight notifications as your flight could be delayed (the plane might be flying in). Transport Canada advises, "Travellers should arrive at the airport earlier than usual, exercise patience and **contact their airline for further information on their flight(s).**" Airline staff are on duty some 3hrs prior: due to staffing and security, check-in closes 1hr before departure. If late, you're not entitled to board (or a refund). Unless booked ahead, seats are first-come first-served. **Check-in and carry-on baggage**, check with your airline as size/weight restrictions vary. **Entry & Departure:** ask your counsellor for advisories on passports, visas and other documentation. You must have a valid passport that will not expire within 6 months of your return www.cic.gc.ca/english/passport/index.asp. Keep a separate photocopy of its ID page with your other records or snap a cell phone photo. After clearing customs and exiting baggage claim, a tour rep holding a sign will usually meet you. Always keep your passport and travel documents in your hand luggage with you on the coach and your bag safely zipped up when walking.



Get Packing Checklist and General Planning & Packing Tips

at www.maritimetravel.ca/inside-scoops
 Your sense of adventure & humour!

Language Tips

While tour guides speak English, some bus drivers in some countries often speak limited English. Handheld electronic translators are reasonably priced and useful when talking with locals. No matter where you travel, try to learn *please* and *thank you* in the local language. Locals usually try to assist—and a smile can work wonders. See Maritime Travel's Popular Phrases.

 **Websites and emails in blue are hyperlinked; just click!**

Canadians: Emergency? Your tour guide will help. Otherwise, outside Canada, contact Global Affairs (collect if needed) 613-996-8885, sos@international.gc.ca, <https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-assistance>.

On Board and On Site

Depending on your tour, many coaches have premium seating and chairs that lean back with ample leg room. With frequent rest stops and nutrition breaks, you might want to keep a bottle of water and your favourite snack on hand. Items regular travellers also pack in hand luggage: extra batteries and memory cards/film. We mentioned to take pen (overleaf)—please do; tour reps don't like losing pens each trip.

On most coach tours, you will have a representative or Tour Director who'll be with your group the entire time. Tour guides at the stops are well-trained and knowledgeable about the countries, routes and options and can answer pretty much any question. It's typical to have people from different countries on your tour, perhaps up to 49 people. It's a great chance to get to know people over the time you'll be travelling. Many people find life-long friends and new travel companions.

Don't feel you have to power through each day of a tour—many people like to sit in a café and watch what's going on in the street rather than go to every attraction and event. There are many choices built into tours and you don't have to do each one—just ensure you're back at the coach before the departure time—you don't want to be running down a street or hire a car to take you to the next country...

When leaving each hotel, do a room sweep and check hand luggage to ensure you have what's needed for the next portion (because check-in luggage will be in the cargo hold). One wonderful thing? At the end of the day, you have a place to lay your head and don't have to scramble to find a restaurant or lodging.

Travellers come home with more than great memories and souvenirs but there are things you don't want to bring home; don't bring plants, meat/animal products, drugs, wood with worm holes or endangered species parts. Don't accept anything from anyone you do not know or trust. Know your limits and exemptions, www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/bgb-rmf-eng.html such as on duty free alcohol.

Travelling Solo?

You know how when someone else drives—maybe your usual route—and you discover things you never noticed, because you always drove? That's like taking a tour—when you don't have to pay attention to the road it's heavenly—not to mention someone else schleps your bags (something else you're used to doing yourself. It's also a relief sometimes when someone else is in charge of decisions and you just have to listen to the guide...enjoy it. Fellow travellers can be great day companions; many will invite you to dine or walk with them; you'll still have you time (if you want it).

Top Tips

Because you'll be getting on and off the coach as well as walking around, wear comfy shoes. Also think layers: with heating and air-conditioning on buses, someone is always too warm while another person might be cold.

\$\$ makes the world go 'round

With Euros in most European countries, currency conversion is very simple. Even if Euros are not the official currency of a country, some businesses do accept them (such as in Croatia, London's Heathrow airport) and it's easy to change them at local banks. ATMs are usually readily available and take Canadian debit cards and credit cards. Log the dates you'll be away with your bank and credit card companies. **Tips:** As withdrawal fees can add up, don't withdraw small amounts. Some Canadian banks have arrangements with banks in other countries for no or reduced fee withdrawals—check with your bank. Keep small bills and Euro coins for tips and purchases at small shops and markets. Cash tips are customarily given to local guides immediately after a tour. For drivers and your Tour Director, tips are given at the end, often via envelopes passed out. Recommended amounts depend on your tour, currency and your satisfaction.

Our 24/7 Emergency Service

We constantly survey airlines, local tour companies and hotels to ensure they meet our customer service standards, so don't let a problem ruin your holiday. Nearly all issues can be handled quickly on site—first seek help from the venue's local staff. Otherwise, call our Emergency Travel Service at **1-888-551-1181**. Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferrable. Schedule changes can occur and airlines and tour operators have the right to change flight and/or tour times, alter, combine services or substitute accommodations. Your counsellor will work with you to ensure you receive information as soon as possible and ensure satisfaction. See your brochure and ticket terms and conditions.

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