



Heading to Higher Ground?

Cut your altitude sickness risk: Pop 600 mg ibuprofen six hours before ascent and again every six hours for a day.

Source: *Annals of Emergency Medicine*

Make a Vacation Count

There's a science to planning the easiest, cheapest, and most relaxing vacation of your life.



CHILL IN THE AIR

Hang time can be healthy time.

49 days

Amount of lead time you need to snag a good domestic airfare

► Fares hit lows around seven weeks before you fly, reports CheapAir.com. For travel abroad, the sweet spot is 81 days out. "Most airlines begin selling tickets 11 months before a flight but don't seriously discount until you're within four months," says CheapAir.com CEO Jeff Klee. "So booking too early is often as bad as booking too late."

The exception: If you're planning a getaway around a holiday or a massive destination event, like Mardi Gras in New Orleans or New Year's Eve in New York City, book your trip as early as possible.

15 percent

Portion of your budget you should set aside for unexpected costs

► Let's say you have \$1,400 to spend on your trip. After booking transit, lodging, and excursions—plus budgeting for meals and souvenirs—you should have about \$200 left.

Unforeseen expenses do come up, says Matt Kepnes, author of *How to Travel the World on \$50 a Day*. You may need an \$80 cab ride to reach your rappelling destination, or find that \$40 will upgrade you to a suite with a balcony and a view. Budget now, and you'll avoid stressing in the moment.

8 days

Minimum amount of time you need to block out for a real vacation

► It'll take you that long to completely unwind, according to a 2013 Dutch study. The researchers found that people's reported feelings of health and well-being peaked just after a week away, when they'd fully transitioned out of work mode.

And while you're away, you can increase your happiness even more by allowing yourself time for serious relaxation. Low-key activities, such as reading in a hammock or lounging in a hot tub, were most strongly linked to improved mood, energy, and stress levels—and the benefits lasted beyond the vacation.

5 milligrams

Dosage of melatonin to take the day before you cross time zones

► Conquer jet lag with melatonin, the hormone that regulates the sleep cycle. Taken as a supplement, melatonin can help your body sync with the light-dark cycle at your destination, a Greek study found.

If you're traveling across six or fewer time zones, take one dose the day before your trip when it's about 10 p.m. in your arrival city. If you're crossing seven or more zones, take a dose daily for up to three days before flying. Once en route, avoid caffeine and eat only when it's mealtime at your destination.

2 events

Maximum number of excursions to plan for each day away

► The guy who travels with a full itinerary and a guidebook stuffed into his fanny pack isn't really experiencing his vacation. He's just checking tourist traps off his list.

"If you plan every second, you'll be stressed," says Kepnes. "Travel is about the unknown." That means exploring when you stumble upon something interesting, and relaxing when you find a lunch café you wish you could bring home with you. So don't plan out more than half of each day—a couple of two-hour activities or a single four-hour activity is plenty.