

Four Steps To Achieving Your Travel Dreams

I have heard so many people throughout my life talk about wanting to travel. And when they do their eyes almost always light up with excitement as they imagine seeing places they've only ever dreamed of, eating food they've only ever seen on TV or Instagram and experiencing a whole different way of life.

The problem however, is while all of these people's desire to travel is real, they keep coming up with excuse after excuse to put their adventures off. Either it's a bad time because their families need extra help, they need to put money towards fixing things around the house first, they are already living paycheck to paycheck, they save money but emergency's keep coming up and they have to put their savings towards that instead, etc. All of these seem like legitimate reasons to postpone travel, and they can certainly make travel harder, but the truth is, even with all these circumstances, travel is still not only possible, it isn't all that hard to achieve. All it takes is REALLY wanting to make it happen.

That said, I'm going to walk you through the four steps I've found actually work when you are trying to achieve your travel dreams. How do I know they work? They are the steps I've followed to pull off my own travel adventures multiple times, while living, yes, paycheck to paycheck.

Step One: Make the decision to travel, then prioritize it.

This is the first step to any adventure. Decide where you want to go, set a general time frame (aiming for 6-8 months out is usually a good time frame if you plan to travel out of the country and 3-4 months if not), and solidify that this is a genuine, set in stone, plan in your own mind. Even if you don't have a dime saved yet, having the mindset that this trip is something that will be happening in the fairly near future is key!

Then, start putting aside funds, with the mindset that your upcoming trip is your priority. This is where how badly you want to travel really comes in because you might have to put off other things you want, or even need, in order to make this happen. For example, last year when I was saving for my second month long Europe backpacking trip, I made the active decision to put off getting myself new bike tires, even though I needed them. I didn't get my hair done professionally for months. I made due with my old summer cloths, even though they are the same one's I've had for over three years. I even dropped my weekly grocery budget from \$75 to \$60, and put that extra \$15 a week towards the trip instead. In short, I put my desire to travel above everything else, setting aside any money I could to fund my trip.

Furthermore, I actively sought out opportunities to make extra money. From donating plasma, to random one time freelance jobs, I gave up some of my personal free time to create extra funds to fulfill my dreams.

Step two: Lock yourself in.

This is, in my opinion, the MOST important step. Do not attempt to save up for your entire trip (e.g. a place to stay, all your spending money, etc), before buying your tickets. Instead, save up just enough to get yourself a non-refundable ticket to your destination and book it. This then will lock you into your journey, thereby giving you great motivation to save the rest of the money you'll need.

Having said this, knowing how to find the most affordable tickets is also really helpful, as you won't have to save up as much to reach this step. The following list are all great tips (each of which I use every time I book a ticket myself), to find the most affordable airline prices.

- Use multiple sites to search for prices. Personally I use cheapoair.com, kyak.com and priceline.com.
- Buy your tickets on a Tuesday (preferably around 3pm), as tickets are generally cheaper at this point in the week. Why? Airlines tend to release sales late Monday night and early Tuesday mornings.
- Consider opting for two, one-way tickets, instead of a round trip. Often times buying two tickets separately instead of a roundtrip at once can save you a lot of money. Particularly when it comes to traveling over seas. Plus, saving up for a single one-way ticket to lock yourself in is easier than saving up for a round trip.
- Search different prices for multiple dates. The price of flying to any given destination is not the same every day. Because of this, be open to changing your dates of travel to fit when the lowest prices occur. For example, if you know you want to travel in mid January of 2018, try checking departures for the 16th, 17th, 18th, 23rd, 24th and 25th. Also be aware that flying in or out of any location is more expensive when you do it on a Friday - Monday. The absolute cheapest days to fly no matter where you are going however, are on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Note however, if you are saving up for a trip that doesn't require air fair you can still lock yourself in by booking and paying for your accommodations. I personally recommend using the site airbnb.com above all else. In my experience Airbnb is cheaper than any hotel as well as most hostels and often times a lot more comfortable. Also, if you've never used Airbnb before, be sure to click on this link (www.airbnb.com/c/jadec1536) to receive a travel credit for your first stay!

Step 3: Do your research

Well before you set off on your travels, you need to make sure you know exactly what you are getting yourself into so you know exactly how much money to save. A few things to research in advance are:

- What is the general price of things in the city you are going to? Is it a small town where you can expect to pay less money for the things you want (i.e. food, drinks, etc), or is it a larger more touristy area where the price of things are going to be significantly more expensive (as they are in Paris or Venice for example).
- If you're traveling to a foreign country, what is the the exchange rate for your money compared to theirs? Where do you plan on exchanging your money? What is the fee charged at your exchange location for the transaction?
- How do you plan to get around? Are you going to take public transportation from the airport to your accommodations, or are you planning on getting a Taxi or Lyft? How will you get around once you are in the city?

All of these are These are questions you need to ask yourself well in advance so you know exactly how much money it is you will have to spend (and therefore must save), when you get to your destination. In essence it will give you an idea of what to expect when you get there.

Step 4: Save!

There's no getting around the fact that you are going to have to save for your trip. If you've taken the above steps however, this step should be a lot easier to achieve. You now have quantifiable and clear cut goals and the proper motivation to reach them. Additionally, you've already saved for the most important part of your trip — getting there!

In order to really make this work and save all the money you'll need however, your mindset is absolutely key. You need to not only prioritize travel, you need to think to yourself: "I have my tickets, I have my place to stay, I'm going, no matter what. Even if I'll be stuck eating a can of beans every day while I'm out there, and have almost no spending money, I will be there". Once you have set in stone the fact that you will be on that plane when the time comes regardless of your money situation, there won't be any stopping you.

Hopefully now you don't feel as if travel is nearly as out of your reach as you may have before reading this. Everybody who wants to travel, deserves to be able to. To see the world, experience new cultures, ways of life and all the other general benefits which come from exploring the world can be truly life changing.

See my blog *7 Reasons You Should Travel As Often As You Can* for a full list of how travel can benefit you.

The truth of the matter though, is simply this: if you want something badly enough, you can make it happen, whether that be travel, or something else. You just have to prioritize your desires and needs, choose what is most important to you then put your all into it. If you do that, your chances of succeeding increase exponentially.

Finally, if you have any tips on how to make your travel dreams happen, please comment below! I'd love to hear all of them!