

Adventures by Disney: Do's and Don'ts of Traveling to Europe

by Dotti Saroufim, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Granted, there are many ways to visit the wonderful countries of our world, but traveling with Adventures by Disney is one that is stress-free and full of great surprises.

□ Having traveled to Europe with Adventures by Disney five times so far, I'm often asked for tips and advice on those little things that will prevent my clients from having any unwanted surprises -- those not of the variety offered by the wonderful Adventure Guides! What follows, in no particular order, are my do's and don'ts of traveling to Europe with Adventures by Disney! [Ed. - And most are great for all overseas travelers!]

□ Don't associate the name "Disney" with theme parks and attractions when looking for the best tour to Europe. Instead, do know that Adventures by Disney offers the quality and the level of service that you always expect from a Disney experience!

□ Don't think that your kids are ever too old to travel with you! And if they are all 18 and older, Adventures by Disney has adult-only experiences as well!

□ Do remember to alert your bank and credit card companies that you will be traveling so that your card is not declined when you are about to purchase that bottle of tasty Italian wine.

□ Don't wait until the last minute to obtain foreign currency as it may take a few days for the bank to accommodate you. Euro may be easy to find -- Czech Korunas for that side trip on the way home to visit Uncle Gustav, not so much.

□ Don't assume that your cell phone automatically has data, texting or international roaming while overseas. Some carriers need you to call prior to the trip and activate your international service. Do assume your cell phone bill will be outrageous if you use your data, texting or international roaming. It may be less expensive to just bring the whole family with you. You can pay for an international data roaming plan with some providers (different than a voice roaming plan), but it may be better to simply disable data roaming entirely until you are somewhere with free WiFi.

□ Do be sure that you allow enough connecting time between flights, especially if going through London's Heathrow Airport or the Charles de

Gaulle Airport in Paris. Heathrow should have a minimum of three hours, as it can take 45 minutes just to get from one terminal to the next. Do allow for enough time to connect on your return trip as well, particularly if you are doing so in a U.S. airport. Remember that you have to retrieve your bags, go through Customs and then check your bags in again for that final leg home. (If your flight connects in a foreign airport, normally your bags will go straight through, with your only Customs check when you first touch U.S. soil. However, if your connecting airport is in a different country than your departure, you will still need to go through Passport Control and Security before boarding your next flight, both a little time-consuming.)

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□ Do invest in a "money belt" of some sort, to keep your valuables close to your person.

□ Do be alert to your surroundings, as you will likely be traveling to big cities, at home and/or abroad. If part of your tour is traveling by train, this is especially important in crowded train stations.

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□ Do try, if at all possible, to add a day to the beginning of your Adventure. Even though most trips start with a welcome dinner later in the day, flight delays and the inevitable jetlag can make that first day exhausting. Plus, you may be visiting a city where you've never been before, and there's so much to see and do!

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□ Do begin to think on local time, not U.S. time. The psychological effects of always thinking of what time it is back home will just make you sleepier!

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□ Do bring a few washcloths with you if you use them. Many European hotels do not have anything smaller than a hand towel.

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□ Don't walk into the bathroom and exclaim, "Look! Two toilets!" (One is likely a bidet!)

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□ Do know that there is a huge difference between an electrical adapter and an electrical converter. An adapter only adds an extension to your U.S. plug so that it fits in the socket. It does not convert electrical current from 220 to 110. Note that while laptops and cell phone chargers almost all come with a built-in voltage converter, many other small appliances do not. You can check on the cord or on the appliance to verify the voltage range. Don't wait until you arrive to try to figure out which of these you have (and need).

□ Don't think that your 110 volt-only curling iron will be "okay just for a few minutes." It probably won't. Neither will the hotel's management when they track down which room was responsible for shutting down the electricity for your entire floor (probably detected by the smell of

burning hair).

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□ Do know that you can buy a replacement curling iron in most department stores. (Don't ask me how I know.)

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□ Do try to learn a few words of the language spoken in the country you are visiting. Even if you totally make a mess of it like we did, your efforts will not go unnoticed! Don't think that those "Learn Italian in 30 Days" CDs are going to have you fluent before your trip.

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□ Do talk to the locals, in whatever way you can communicate! Their stories are what you may remember most about your trip. If conversing with someone not fluent in English, speak slowly and clearly, avoid slang and use fewer words rather than more. Being a talker, I'd be more likely to say, "Hi, isn't it a nice day? This is my first time in Italy, and I was wondering if I could get some of those yummy looking grapes to bring back to my hotel room?" Instead, if the storekeeper doesn't speak English and is now shaking her head and muttering under her breath, just point, hold up some Euro and say, "Grapes?" Don't be shy to use body language as well, to make your point -- unless you're looking for the closest bathroom, when "Toilette?" may actually work best.

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□ Don't, however, try to impress your waiter by ordering your entire dinner from a foreign menu without some help. Trust me on this. ("I just ate... WHAT???")

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□ Don't be an armchair traveler -- experience the food and the culture and even the dancing of your destination! With Adventures by Disney, it's easy to do just that. On our tour to Italy last year, we were able to make pizza (and cheese!) at a farm, ride bikes atop the ancient walls of Lucca and even swim in the Mediterranean off of our private boat circling Capri!

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□ Do travel with an open mind and remember that there are many different cultures, religions and ways of life, and it's our differences that make us so interesting. You're not only seeing new places, but you're experiencing a new way of seeing things! And finally, Do have the adventure of a lifetime!

About The Author: □ Dotti is an agent with MouseEarVacations.com. She has taken five Adventures by Disney trips to Europe, 11 Disney Cruises, over 50 trips to Walt Disney World and is scheduled to take her 15th trip abroad next month. Dotti loves travel, writing and photography, but enjoys spending time with her family -- no matter the location -- above all else.

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