

Live your travel dreams with the Autistic Travel Coach!

Where do you want to go?

List up to ten places (cities, regions, countries) you would like to visit. They do not need to be in any particular order and your list may change over time. Your selections can be a specific place, such as Disney World or Machu Picchu, a city or town, a state, country, or region. This is your personal travel bucket list and there are not right or wrong answers.

Here are some ideas if you are having trouble getting started:

- Beginners - be a tourist in your own town or road trip around your state or region
- Intermediate – take a road trip out west, visit Canada, go on a Caribbean or Alaskan cruise
- Advanced - go abroad to some popular destinations like Paris, Sydney, or London. Go off the beaten path and save money by traveling to Central America, Southeast Asia, or Eastern Europe.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

General travel types

Now that you have an idea of where you want to travel, think about what type(s) of travel will work best for you. This is the first step in finding your travel style and it is fine if you aren't sure yet. You can learn as you go.

We will go more in depth on travel types in part II of this guide, but for now let's start with some general categories:

- Group tours or cruise - easy, expensive, less flexible, may be difficult to have alone time (G)
- Travel with friends - you don't have to do all the planning, but you have to go along with what other people want to do a lot of the time and may have trouble finding alone time (F)
- Work with a travel agent - it's free! Good for moderate budgets (A)
- Solo travel - you decide what you want to do, can be budget or luxury, lots of planning involved (S)

Put a check mark next to each category that you would like to consider. Choose at least one category or as many as all four.

Pick at least three of the destinations on your list and label them with the type of travel that will work best. For example, if you want to go to Paris, but you don't want to deal with the planning, you could choose to go on a group trip, and you would put (G) next to Paris. If you want to take a road trip out west, but you don't want to do all the driving, you might choose to go with friends, which would look like "American West (F)".

How will you get there?

Decide what the best mode of transportation will be for your top three destinations. You may not find the "perfect" option for you. Each of these modes of transportation will have noises and other stimuli that could be an anxiety trigger. Think about your triggers when considering each option. You can rank them in order of most to least preferable if you like.

- Car - more time consuming, but can be more fun
- Bus - inexpensive, still time consuming, but takes away the stress of driving
- Train - time consuming, but fun and relaxing if you like to stare out the window at scenery
- Plane - expensive, convenient, can be stressful
- Boat – cruise ships require no planning but there can be a lot of interaction with other travelers, freighters offer a unique experience but can be extremely noisy
- Walk or bike - lots of people do this across countries or even entire continents, have to be in pretty good shape

Lodging

Decide the best type of lodging for at least three of your destinations. Answering these questions will help you decide which type(s) of lodging is best.

Do you enjoy sleeping away from home?

Do you like to be alone or can you share a room with other people?

How big is your budget for lodging?

You don't have to stay at the same place for your entire trip if you don't want to.

- Hotels - comfortable and expensive
- Motels - less expensive, possibly less comfortable
- Hostel - sometimes possible to get a private room, far less expensive, you can cook for yourself, often noisy, may have to share bathroom and shower
- [Airbnb](#) - You can get a private room or a whole place to yourself and it can feel more like home, but a whole place can be expensive. With a private room you may share cooking and bathing area with others.
- Bed and breakfast - usually nice, comfortable, moderate to expensive price, you may have communal breakfast, but much more privacy than a hostel.
- [TrustedHousesitters](#) – for \$119 per year you can apply to do free housesitting for people all over the world. I stayed for a week in someone's condo in Columbus and took care of two

cats and a small dog while exploring the city at my own pace. It can be quite competitive to get house sits in popular destinations.

- [Couchsurfing](#) – social expectations can be challenging, may not have a private room, host may want to show you around, go out to the club, etc., and you will have to deal with the stress of having to say no sometimes.
- Commune or farm, convent or monastery, science station – I haven't tried any of these yet, but you should know that they are options. You can work on an organic farm for free room and board, the convents and monasteries are less expensive than hotels but not free, and there are several science stations that have cabins or camp sites.

Activities

Pick one of the destinations on your list and spend some time researching activities you want to do when you visit. You can search phrases like "Top 10 activities in Boston" or "Best things to do in New Orleans". I recommend using [TripAdvisor](#) for finding popular activities and [Atlas Obscura](#) for finding "off the beaten path" sites. Atlas Obscura is particularly helpful if you love history and/or science.

The Autistic Travel Coach tips for choosing activities:

- Choose relaxing activities like museums, botanical gardens, hiking, or book shops. You can be adventurous when you are feeling up to it. I have hiked to the top of Victoria Falls and looked over the edge, went cage diving with great white sharks in Cape Town, and did the polar plunge in Antarctica. But you are far more likely to find me reading a book in a quiet corner somewhere.
- Try going to less popular sites, exploring off the beaten path, or in more rural areas. Figure out where the crowd is heading and go in the opposite direction!
- Take breaks. Leave plenty of time between activities and take a whole day off to stay in and read if you need to.
- Find solitude in public when you can. Put on head phones, sit on a bench and read a book, walk or sit at the park.
- Group day tour/walking tours can be fun. You can choose to join one or more tours when you reach your destination, but you may want to avoid group activities if you are feeling anxious.
- If you are a budget traveler, other travelers may pressure you to "come out of your shell" and have more fun, particularly if you are at a hostel and people are drinking, but you don't owe anyone any explanation. Sometimes you will join in the activities and have a good time, but other times you will choose to stay behind, and that is okay. Meeting other travelers on the road has been quite enjoyable for me, but I only do it when I know I'm feeling up to it.

The Autistic Travel Coach general tips for self-care on the road

- Eat healthy. Don't under eat or over eat, cook your meals if you can, and splurge on comfort food when necessary.
- Exercise. Walking tours are a great way to stay active!
- Get enough sleep. Stay in at night and/or don't plan early activities for every day.

- Meditate. Even five minutes a day can make a big difference.
- Travel at non-peak season. You'll avoid the crowds and save money, too!
- Don't get too isolated if you are doing long-term solo travel. Be honest with yourself about when you need to be around people. Only you can know when the right time is to socialize.
- Forgive yourself if you have a public meltdown. This is the most important. When you are traveling, things don't always go as you plan. You might get better at dealing with this as you gain more travel experience, but you will still have meltdowns sometimes. I have had very public meltdowns in foreign countries and I was embarrassed. But I forgave myself and moved on. I didn't let it stop me from living my life the way I want to.

Next steps

If you have made it this far, congratulations!

Please contact me for a free 30-minute consultation. If you haven't completed the tool and you need help or have questions, you should still schedule the free consultation. On our call, we will review or complete your activity guide and answer any questions you have before moving on to the phase two travel style guide, which is also available to you free of charge. Feel free to have a parent, guardian, friend, mentor, counselor, or other trusted person on our phone call for support if you wish.

I look forward to getting to know you better and helping you live your travel dreams!

Warmest regards,

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