

NOT ALL FRIENDS ARE TRAVEL FRIENDS

Planning what you'll do when you're there and how you'll pay expenses can help make a friends trip go more smoothly.

By Kate Loweth

When writer Jamie Davis Smith of Washington, DC, learned that her travel partner, a trained naturalist, wanted to spend the majority of their short trip to Iceland photographing moss, she knew they were planning two entirely different trips. While there was only so much that could be done since the flights were already booked, she vowed not to put herself in this position again. "In the future, I will discuss with friends ahead of time exactly what each of us wants to do to make sure it's a good fit and ensure we are on the same page before booking flights," she says.

Traveling with friends for the first time can be tricky. Just because you and a friend go on hikes or meet up for brunch on occasion doesn't necessarily mean that you are compatible travel partners.

"Be selective about choosing your travel companions," recommends Irene S. Levine, PhD, psychologist and friendship expert. "If you are uncomfortable with a friend or have frequent conflicts, the problems are likely to be made worse by the stresses of travel."



Skogafoss waterfall in Iceland

Discuss Your Travel Vision

Communicating your travel style up front is important. Some people might be looking for a "vacation"—one where you spend all day on beach lounge chairs enjoying umbrella beverages and a good book—while others are looking for an active trip, where landmarks and museums are checked off. Establishing this early on

in the planning will ensure everyone has the trip they are looking for.

It's also a good idea to get a feel for the flow of the days. Will you hit the ground running early in the morning or enjoy a more leisurely start? Nothing gets the trip off on the wrong foot like a grumpy travel partner who wants to sleep in. Booking day trips can help navigate this area, as both parties know what time they'll need to be ready to go and what is on the agenda.

If you have different interests, you can divide up the days so that each person gets to check off some of their must-do activities. This way, everyone can feel happy that their interests were covered.

Talk about Money

Finances are often a hot-button issue while traveling, so it's advisable to find out in advance what people are willing to spend. Contributing a certain amount of money to a shared pot can

keep the financial transactions to a minimum while on the trip. If you want to keep costs clear from the start, a cruise or all-inclusive vacation can be a good option.

Travel partners should decide how to handle splitting shared meals, whether that's each person paying their own share or splitting the cost evenly. This is especially important when one traveler abstains from drinking alcohol or when each person's share is disproportionate for another reason. Assuming that everyone is willing to pay an equal share can cause bad feelings.

"I'm a big fan of apps like Splitwise for group trips," says frequent traveler Hazel Rickett. "They make it easy to track shared expenses in real time, so no one's stuck awkwardly asking friends what they owe."



The Colosseum and Constantine Arch in Rome

Be Willing to Split Up and Give Each Other Privacy

Traveling together doesn't mean you have to spend every minute together. "When traveling with friends on a group tour, I find it really important to build in a bit of independence. For me, that might mean going for an early morning run, taking time for a walk on my own,

or simply enjoying a quiet read in a café," Rickett says.

Any group of friends "will have different habits, lifestyles and ideas about travel, so they need to be flexible, respectful and willing to compromise," reminds Levine. With a bit of planning and honest conversations, traveling with friends can be something you'll want to do again and again.



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