

## **Helpful Reminders for International Travel.**

There is one rule for international travel, everything else is just a helpful tip to make the “one rule” more achievable. More fun!

### ***The one rule: Make friends with the unexpected!***

Leaning into our Ignatian Spirituality, international travel offers a whole host of beautiful, fascinating, and new experiences. Some of these are easily embraced. Others are, at times, challenging.

The Ignatian maxims of “*God in All Things*” and “*All is Gift*” allow us to “...make friends with the unexpected” as we grow in curiosity, love, and... good humor!

Curiosity, love, and good humor? What could possibly go wrong???

*The following are tips we have learned through our own experiences, friends, and other resources. We are sure that you know some things that we don't, so please email us and we can add those tips to the list.*

### **Tranes, Planes, and Automobiles**

- Always build in extra time with travel. If able, arrive a day earlier than expected. Expect delays! Don't worry... it's all a part of your pilgrimage.
- Make sure your passport is up to date - at least 6 months away from your trip. People have been refused entry on a flight due to expiration dates 6 months or less.
- Carry anything you need immediately or on your first days of travel on the plane with you (i.e., medications, hiking shoes, possibly a change of clothes, etc).
- When booking travel, remember that European bus and rail systems are fantastic. However, you may not be able to book until you are 1-3 months out from your travels.
- A site like Rome2Rio will help you consider price, convenience, etc. when determining flight versus ground transportation.
- When booking flights, double check the airline's baggage policies. More and more, airlines are charging extra for checking in and even carrying-on bags. It used to be just the budget airlines (i.e. Ryan Air, EasyJet), but now many airlines

charge extra for baggage. Sometimes a cheaper flight ends up being much more expensive due to extra baggage fees.

- Review all travel and lodging reservations one month in advance - making sure that all confirmations are lining up and still in order. (We recently found that we had booked two hotels in the same city for eight nights and forgot to cancel one. YIKES! Another time, we found we had not reserved a hotel when we got there. YIKES & YIKES) But, it's all a part of discovering how "God is in all things." Be especially careful with trips booked on miles and third party sites as flights often change.
- Keep a copy of your itinerary and confirmation numbers in two locations (i.e. phone and paper).
- If your flight transfers in the United Kingdom, remember that they are no longer part of the EU, so you will have to go through customs, security, and recheck your bags again. Allow for extra time.
- For your longer flights, you may want to research your airline carrier's reviews.
- If possible, arrive in Europe a day or two early to get oriented and adjust to the time allowing extra time. Some people breeze through this, but for others, it takes a few days to adjust.

### **Cash, Credit Cards, and ATMs**

- Credit cards are widely accepted in Portugal and Spain, however, there are still many places that prefer cash, or have a 5-10 Euro minimum requirement. You'll want to have both cash and card with you on your trip.
- Check in with your bank or AAA to inquire about rates for obtaining Euros. You will not need much cash and it often is best to withdraw cash from an ATM while in Europe, however, it can be helpful to have a bit of cash on you until you can withdraw cash.
  - Do some research on your ATM, bank or credit cards. Find out what fees they charge for withdrawals and if they have a foreign transaction fee.

- With ATM's you can be hit with a fee from your bank and the ATM - double fees, ouch! Some banks offer a fee reimbursement or free ATM usage with particular banks.
  - Charles Schwab may still offer fee reimbursement on all ATM transactions. All you have to do is open a trading account (although you do not have to perform trades), which comes with a free checking account.
- If your credit card has foreign transaction fees, you may want to consider switching to a card without fees.

## **Safety**

- Portugal and Spain are very safe countries, and the areas we will be traveling to are used to pilgrims. The government is very attentive to the Camino routes, knowing that the Camino is a major source of tourism and travel in the country.
- As in the States, pickpocketing or petty theft is a thing. Just be aware, not afraid.
- Be aware of your surroundings and your cash, cards, etc. Similarly, if traveling on buses and trains, be aware and wise.
- Do not leave your valuables unattended.
- In large cities, it is recommended that you use a money belt, etc. to store your cash, cards and passport. To be clear, anecdotally, there is no need to anticipate a greater likelihood of theft, it's just that dealing with it overseas and on the road is more of an adventure than you may have hoped for.
- Keep a photocopy of your passport and any cards you are bringing with you. You may want to ask another person on the trip to hold your copies. Additionally, leave a copy with your emergency contact (or another trusted person).

## **Phones & Communications**

*We strongly recommend that you prayerfully consider what type of relationship you want to have with your devices while traveling. There is no right or wrong answer... let it be between you and the Lord. Some will want to stay in touch with people at home. If you*

*are like me (Dan), you will purchase a brand new iPhone for the trip and lose it on day two of a month-long pilgrimage. All is gift!*

- Check with your phone carrier to see what options are available for international plans.
- Many cafes, hotels, etc. provide wifi, however, you'll want to have coverage for when you are walking.
- If your phone is unlocked, look into getting a Portuguese/ Spanish SIM card/eSIM. Your carrier can provide details on how to do this.
- WhatsApp is vital when traveling. Many travel companies, restaurants, hotels, etc. utilize WhatsApp for communication. It's also a great way to stay in contact with new friends from all over the world. As a group, we will communicate via a WhatsApp group chat.
- Download the Google Translate App. This allows you to translate via voice, text, or image. You can even download a version on your phone that is accessible when you do not have wifi access.
- If you want to practice your Portuguese or Spanish, you may want to download Duolingo, which is a free app that helps you learn a new language. Note: You may encounter different dialects, but, in general, you will have better recognition of words and phrases.
- If you want additional information on the Camino specifically, Wise Pilgrim can be a helpful app. It has maps, distances, and resources available in each town (i.e. restaurant, water source, hotel).