

**BACKPACKING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:
MY EXPERIENCES & TIPS FOR OPTIMAL
PREPARATION!**



**WELCOME TO
SOUTHEAST ASIA**



CONTENTS



03

IS IT ALMOST
THAT TIME?

04

PREPARATION &
USEFUL APPS

06

BUDGET &
FINANCES

08

HOSTELS

10

TRANSPORTATION:
BUS, TRAIN, SCOOTER

14

LIFESTYLE
& SAFETY

16

INSPIRATION



IS IT ALMOST THAT TIME?

Your first time backpacking might be a bit tense. Especially if you haven't taken a long-distance trip or been to such countries before. I had exactly the same thing!

To help you prepare for your backpacking adventure in Southeast Asia, you'll find my experiences and tips in this guide. This way, you can start preparing yourself for a wonderful adventure with peace of mind.

GOOD LUCK PREPARING FOR YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE!

KEVIN





Preparation

Preparing for your backpacking adventure includes preparing for the destinations you plan to visit. You can find destination guides at www.woltotravel.com!



Make a notebook with phone numbers of:

- Health insurance emergency center,
- Bank
- Your country's embassies per country
- Your parents, & parents of your travel companions Possibly important friends

Nice to have if your cell phone is unexpectedly lost and of course in an emergency situation.

ALTHOUGH SOME THINK IT'S FINE NOT TO DO TOO MUCH PREPARATION, I THINK GOOD PREPARATION IS HALF THE BATTLE. AFTER ALL, YOU ARE LESS LIKELY TO ENCOUNTER UNPLEASANT SURPRISES, WHICH IS NICE WHEN YOU ARE JUST STARTING.

Join the South East Asia Backpacker Community on Facebook (group).

Answers to questions about

- Hostels
- Itineraries
- Lodging
- Calls for day trips (useful to save money when traveling alone)
- Should you forget something or need a Random Reader for example you will usually find a helpful travel companion here too (or you may be that helpful travel companion yourself)!



What do I take with me when I travel?

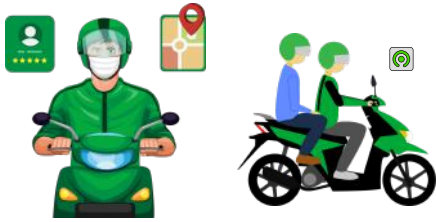
You can find that, as well as information about my backpack(s), at en.woltotravel.com/blogs-1/backpacking. Includes digital packing list!



Useful apps

Making your life while traveling a little bit easier!

TAXI'S



GRAB: GET AN INDICATION OF A GOOD PRICE FOR A RIDE IF YOU WANT TO NEGOTIATE WITH A CAB DRIVER

USE **GOJEK** IN INDONESIA, THIS IS A LOT CHEAPER.

CONVERT EXCHANGE RATES



DUE TO TRANSACTION FEES, YOU NEVER GET THE FULL EXCHANGE RATE.

SPLIT THE BILL(S) WITH YOUR TRAVEL COMPANION



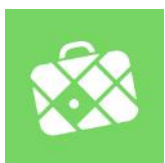
MANAGING HO(S)TEL BOOKINGS

Booking.com



HOSTELWORLD

MAPS.ME



USEFUL TO DOWNLOAD THE MAP OF A DESTINATION TO NAVIGATE OFFLINE.



Budget

If you were to categorize it you would have to get by with the "normal" category for a maximum of €30 to €45 per day. This amount is an average based on:



Accommodation (hostel)



Food & Drinks



Activities



Transportation

Save some money through:

- **Exploring on your own!**

Organized tours are a big part of your expenses. A full morning (and/or afternoon) will easily cost around €20 - €40. Doing a little research doesn't cost much and will save you plenty of money.

In some places, such as boat trips on a lake or visiting large temple complexes, you simply cannot go without a tour.

SIGHTSEEING IS PERFECTLY POSSIBLE (IF YOU WANT TO RIDE SCOOTER) BY YOURSELF. IF YOU TRAVEL ALONE IN YOU WILL SURELY MEET PEOPLE IN YOUR HOSTEL WHO WANT TO JOIN YOU ON A PRIVATE SCOOTER TOUR.

Alcohol

Alcohol also secretly takes up a lot of your daily budget. After all, for the price of a beer, you also have a plate of food. And, of course, we all know what you're quicker to order "just one more" of.



Bargaining tip: Don't feel aggressive by bargaining at cab rides or in markets. People know you are a tourist and by default ask the top price. Sometimes you can take up to 50% off the price.





Finance

Withdrawing cash is often more expensive than you think abroad and Dutch bank cards are not accepted everywhere.... Therefore, apply for a Prepaid Credit Card!



Request a Prepaid Creditcard:

- Open an account by currency (Dong, Rupiah, Baht).
- To deposit, pay in euros at the exchange rate valid at the time.
- Ideal for paying larger amounts, such as day tours or train/bus tickets.

Per deposit you pay a small fee, around €1.00 - €1.50, then when you withdraw you pay another fee of 1% on the amount withdrawn.

IT TAKES SOME GETTING USED TO, ALL THESE DIFFERENT CURRENCIES. ESPECIALLY THE DIFFERENT RATIOS TO THE EURO SOMETIMES MAKE IT CONFUSING.

- A calculation in Thailand yielded a significantly better rate: 34 Baht per € (Wise) vs 32 Baht per € (Rabobank).
- In Indonesia I used Maybank ATM, here I came out better in terms of rate with the Dutch debit card. The reason? They do not charge transaction fees.
- In Vietnam & Cambodia, as in Thailand, they do charge transaction fees.

Furthermore, I noticed with my travel companion (in Vietnam and Thailand) that the Dutch bank card was by no means accepted everywhere.





Hostels

The all-in-one solution for every backpacker: hostels. Some tips to make it a little easier.



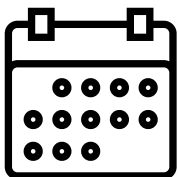
Bedbugs

Not always nice, but check your bed for bed bugs and also don't put your things on the bed before you've done this. Also look under your mattress cover, especially in the edges on the side of your mattress they are often found.



Choosing your hostel

Online you will find countless nice hostels, for example search the Join the South East Asia Backpacker Community on Facebook (group) or sign up for the English-speaking backpacker groups of the countries you want to visit. Google on city + hostel and you'll also find more than enough tips for great places to sleep.



Planning in advance

Those nice hostels are popular and fill up quickly. If you do not like to plan, it is more difficult to book these hostels, because in Thailand such hostels are fully booked as early as 2 weeks ahead.

No worries, there are plenty of other (just as good) hostels. Here you will meet travelers who also wanted to stay in that one hostel, but were also late in booking.



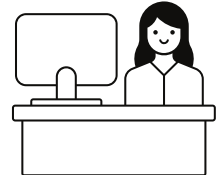


Hostels

The all-in-one solution for every backpacker: hostels. Some tips to make it a little easier.

Helpful and very friendly

All the hostel staff are always super nice and helpful, so ask for help when needed. They know plenty of great places to eat and activities to do if you just don't know yourself. Most hostels can also book and reserve everything for you if you want.



Laundry

Most hostels have their own laundry service. Usually within 24 hours you will get your clothes back nice and fresh and neatly folded. Should your hostel not offer this you will find numerous laundries along the road that operate on a similar principle.



Late arrival

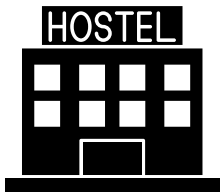
If you have a bus/train that arrives late in the evening or at night, check in advance if your hostel has a 24-hour reception. This is indicated when booking. Some hostels close at night, so it is good to communicate your expected arrival time in advance.





Buses

The most efficient way to travel the longer distances between destinations.



Arranging buses, cabs, vans can almost always be done through the hostel where you are staying. They have deals with other companies or know how to find reliable people for a fair price. You will then usually be picked up at your hostel as well so you don't have to lug all your stuff to the other side of town.



Take enough food/drink with you on longer bus trips, the bus does not always stop very often along the way. Furthermore, at some stops you don't have a thunderous culinary offer either. There is usually a stop around dinner time, but this can also be fine at 1 a.m. if you go on the night bus.

I HAVEN'T HAD ANY NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES WITH BUS SAFETY, BUT I PREFER TO ALWAYS BE IN CONTROL OF MY OWN STUFF.

- **Sleeper buses:** a convenient way to save money and time because you don't have to book an overnight stay and you arrive at your destination first thing in the morning. For me (194cm), the reclining seats were not long enough to sleep well.
- Do not take a seat in the back of the bus, there are 5 seats next to each other and you will be completely sandbagged.
- Keep your daypack with valuables close to you and don't leave anything valuable in your backpack.
- Your big backpack goes at the bottom of the bus and so you don't see what happens with it.





Tips for traveling by bus

- Buses do not always drop you off in the center (or, as in Vietnam, at your hostel). You are then ambushed by tuktuk and cab drivers who charge way too high prices because they know you are dead tired getting off such a bus. Total no empathy that you are barely awake and want to take a moment to see where you are going:
 - Check what a Grab costs
 - Try to negotiate well
 - Share a cab with other backpackers or:
 - Walk 5 minutes in a random direction and stop a cab yourself along the road. You also encounter this phenomenon at major tourist attractions, next to airports and hotels, etc. It pays to walk a few minutes and then hail someone yourself.

PUNCTUALITY IS UNKNOWN HERE. IF A BUS TRIP TAKES 10 HOURS, IT CAN ALSO BE 8 OR 12 HOURS. 13:30 DEPARTURE CAN ALSO BE 14:30, BUT 08:00 ARRIVAL CAN ALSO BE 06:30.

- Tuktuks are similar to a cab for short distances. Do keep your phone secure, especially in Cambodia (Phnom Penh) plenty of phones are stolen from tourists' hands by passing scooters.
- Always make sure you have change and can pay as best as you can. Larger bills are sometimes not accepted because they do not have enough change for them. This way you avoid uncomfortable situations.





Travelling by train

Especially in Java (Indonesia) the most efficient way to travel longer distances between destinations. In Vietnam and Thailand, it is mainly an alternative to the bus.

- Traveling by train is more expensive but can be more comfortable. Particularly in Thailand, I heard that the train ride between Bangkok and Chiang Mai is popular and thus quickly booked up.
- If you like planning you can book train rides well in advance, otherwise you might have to opt for the bus. In Indonesia (Java) you have a bit more time, unless you want Eksekutif (Business Class). This is usually booked up faster.
- Ekonomi is the option to mingle with the locals, because during my train trips through Java, I was always the only tourist in the compartment!





Scooter

Good to know in advance about the most popular means of transportation in Asian countries!



- Riding a scooter is great fun and the easiest way to get around, but because these have 110+ cc, Asian scooters are officially motorcycles.
- With a Dutch car license you are officially not allowed to ride these, which means you are not insured in case of accidents.

BEFORE RENTING, CHECK TIRE PRESSURE/FUEL CAPACITY AND TAKE PICTURES OF THE SCOOTER AND DAMAGE; AVOIDS HASSLES AFTERWARDS.

- If you do (because almost everyone does), drive carefully, especially in Thailand and Indonesia where they drive on the left. Don't brake if there is loose sand or pebbles on the road. Wear a helmet and choose one that fits properly!
- In Thailand be prepared to hand over your passport as a deposit, there is almost no escape from this. You can Google beforehand for reviews that mention that you can also pay the deposit with cash.
- Ideally, your scooter should also have a holder for your cell phone, which is handy when navigating!





Lifestyle

Staying fit and healthy while traveling requires some extra attention.



- Everyone will probably get sick at some point because of the switch to Asian cuisine.
- After all, it is not as hygienic everywhere, the food is often a lot spicier and people use different spices/preparation methods.
- Your stomach will need some time to get used to these new stimuli.

THE PORTION OF VEGETABLES IN RICE/NOODLE DISHES IS OFTEN QUITE LOW, SO YOU SHOULD ALREADY ORDER AN EXTRA PORTION OF VEGETABLES FOR VITAMINS.

- You absolutely cannot drink tap water. I also read a lot about avoiding ice cubes. I tried to avoid them, but you can't escape them at most places. It didn't make me sick.
- I had trouble getting a good dose of vitamins in the beginning and had caught a cold right away in the cold north of Vietnam as a result.
- At the 7-Eleven you can get a banana or some mango, at the other stores there is often not even fruit. So you really have to buy this at market stalls which takes a bit more effort. In Vietnam, they tried charging me € 2.40 for a basic apple..





Convenience stores

Your best friend while travelling



- Even though they mostly sell noodles, chips, chocolate and cookies, these mini stores are very convenient. You can get coffee and noodles to go everywhere.
- The 7-Eleven is absolutely great, as you can get a toasted sandwich or a burger/rice meal heated!
- Standard cosmetics products are also available in most convenience stores!

BY THE WAY, DON'T EXPECT A HIGH-QUALITY 7-ELEVEN BURGER; I FOUND IT COMPARABLE TO MCDONALDS' CHICKEN BURGER. THE SANDWICH (HAM/CHEESE), ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS AN ABSOLUTE FAVORITE: 10/10! .

- **Thailand:** 7-Eleven (open 24/7)
- In Thailand, you'll get a **30-day unlimited data Sim Card** just for 150 Baht at the **7-Eleven**. Just ask the cashier for a 150 Baht Sim Card. Note that they require your passport.
- **Cambodia:** 7-Eleven (Siem Reap & Phnom Penh)
- **Indonesia:** Indomaret / Circle K / Alfamart
- **Vietnam:** Mini Mart (Circle K only in Hanoi and Saigon)





Safety

I never felt unsafe for a moment myself, but it's always good to take some 'safety' measures.



- Try not to stand out too much with a watch, excessive jewelry and (expensive) branded clothing.
- Since it is hard to afford for a large part of the locals, you also show more respect toward them.
- No matter how safe it is, never take your passport with you when you go anywhere. It's safer in the locker of your hostel.

THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES I VISITED WERE REALLY SUPER SAFE. I DIDN'T FEEL UNSAFE ONCE IN 3 MONTHS.

- In addition, it is wise not to walk around with too large sums of cash in your pocket, while you can also spread out some of your cash.
- I've heard stories of phone snatching (especially in Cambodia), so be especially careful about holding your phone in your hands in a TukTuk.





Lastly!

The well-known tourist traps, you come across them almost everywhere.



- In some places, guides come and walk with you uninvited and want to accompany you, then demand an (excessive) fee from you.
- Check if the restaurant / street food stall has prices on the menu. Saves you an excessive bill.
- Briefly read up in advance regarding the culture of the specific country you will be visiting. I have included some information in my itineraries!

YOU'LL LIKELY FIND SOME TOURIST TRAPS ALMOST EVERYWHERE. I DID NOT FIND THE SALESMEN TO BE SO PUSHY, OFTEN ACCEPTING A NO WITHOUT TRYING TO PUSH TOO MUCH.

- They are not major changes, but there are some details that will make you show more respect to the locals.
- At temples in Bali, vendors try to tell you that you have to buy a sarong, even though it is included in the price of the ticket. Also, don't engage in "obligatory" things to buy for an offering.
- After many tourist attractions you pass an endless path with only souvenir sellers on the left and right. Just so you know in advance!





WOLTOTRAVEL
INSPIRATION FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP

Indonesia

A land of unparalleled diversity and beauty. Temples, rice fields, waterfalls and many more magnificent sights await you!





WOLTOTRAVEL
INSPIRATION FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP

Thailand

The land of smiles known for its rich culture and history, visible in its many temples, palaces and historical sites.





WOLTOTRAVEL
INSPIRATION FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP

Vietnam

Beautiful nature, culture, history and, above all, lots and lots of scooters. A country that will surprise you from north to south with beautiful places and landscapes.





WOLTOTRAVEL
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Cambodia

A country with a rich history that includes the Angkor Wat temple complex, which is overshadowed by the horrific events of 1975-1979.





WOLTOTRAVEL
INSPIRATION FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP

THANKS FOR READING MY GUIDE

HAVE FUN!

HERE'S TO AN AMAZING TRIP!

- KEVIN

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