

SundayTravel

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

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ADOBE

PLANNING FOR YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE

By Kari Bodnarchuk
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

The idea of traveling around the world or taking your dream trip may seem out of reach at the moment, but now is the perfect time to start laying the foundation for your next adventure. Years ago, I planned an 18-month around-the-world adventure — long before digital libraries, travel apps, and Amazon Prime became the norm. Researching and planning from home couldn't be easier, so take this time to plan your next well-deserved vacation. Here are some tips to consider.

Information gathering

Libraries may be closed, but most offer online digital services and have extended their offerings, allowing more people to borrow travel-related books, magazines, DVDs, and other useful materials. The Boston Public Library has also extended library card expiration dates, so you'll have until October to renew an expired card and can still use it in the meantime.

Support your local bookstores by purchasing travel maps, guidebooks, and language CDs. In the wake of the coronavirus, many bookstores now offer free shipping or even curbside delivery. Harvard Book Store and

Dreaming of the time when you will again be able to move about and explore the world? Now is the time to ensure that you'll be prepared and ready to go when it is safe to do so.



Porter Square Books, for instance, will either ship your items for free or offer curbside pick-up so you can drive by and scoop up your order. Porter Square Books also offers free home delivery in Somerville and Cambridge.

Some magazine publishers have put content online for free to reach more readers. Elevation Outdoors, a magazine focused on outdoor adventure and travel in the Rocky Mountains and beyond, and Travelife, a Canadian travel publication, for instance, have offered free reads of their magazines online (Elevation Outdoors has committed to posting its March and April issues online, and sending free print issues of the April publication to subscribers).

Online travel chat rooms provide the perfect place for travelers to share stories and for you to gather the most up-to-date information on destinations. Whether you're planning a trip, looking to summit a mountain, or need info on training for your first marathon, you can meet other like-minded people through Meetup.com, a free online platform.

"Connecting with people in chat rooms is a

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Use this time to prepare for your next travel excursion

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great way to remain social and plan a future trip,” says Nena Zahedi, a flight attendant and a board member for Travel Enthusiast, another free online travel resource. “Asking your e-pal what their experiences are is a great way to discover hidden gems,” adds Zahedi, who recommends Travelers Chat and Trip Advisor Forum as other good resources for gathering real information from other travelers.

Tap all your resources. Contact people who come from the places you want to visit, such as the owners of the Thai restaurant down the street or members of a local French language club — send an e-mail, leave a voice mail, or find people through social media. Reach out to people through your alma mater to see if any alumni live in the places you plan to explore. Again, social media provides a good way to track people down.

Learn a language

Use library resources to learn a language while you're at home. The BPL, for instance, offers interactive language-learning services for young kids (Little Pims) and adults (Mango Languages).

Many good apps can help guide you through the language-learning process. **Duolingo**, a free app that works on your phone or desktop, offers 31 different languages and uses fun, interactive games to help you practice. **HelloTalk**, another free app, connects you with native speakers of more than 100 languages who can help you learn their language through voice recordings, video calls, texts, and more. This interactive experience connects you with real people — perfect for a time when we feel so isolated — and can make learning a language even more

fun. **Babbel**, a paid app starting at \$6.95 per month, helps you gain real-life conversation skills, while **Language Bird** lets you practice your new language skills with other students in a moderator-led online chatroom, called Chirp Room.

Check your documents

Make sure your trip documents are up to date and get paperwork going to renew any that may expire in the next year. For travel to many countries, your passport must not expire within six months of your visit. Passport renewals can be submitted by mail (see travel.state.gov for details), while new passports must be done in person once offices reopen. All passport offices, including the Boston Passport Agency, remain closed and are only providing passports to those needing to travel within 72 hours because of life-or-death emergencies (serious illnesses, injuries, or deaths in your immediate family) that require you to travel outside the United States.

Starting Oct. 1, 2020, travelers must have a REAL ID-compliant card to fly within the United States, which means a REAL ID driver's license, US passport, Global Entry card, US Military ID, or Enhanced Driver's License (the EDL lets you travel between the United States and Canada, Mexico, and some Caribbean countries — once borders reopen — by land or sea only without needing a passport, but it does cost more than a REAL ID driver's license). Now is a good time to get the paperwork done for a REAL ID driver's license, unless you don't mind carrying a passport or other required card for domestic travel. To save time, go to the Registry of Motor Vehicles website to fill out paperwork for the REAL ID, but note that you'll have to go to the RMV



to complete the application. Eight Registry of Motor Vehicles service centers remain open in Massachusetts, including Boston/Haymarket, Fall River, Springfield, and Worcester, for when it's the right time to venture out.

Look into homestays

After this period of isolation, you'll likely be more than ready to embrace the world and connect with other people. Local hosts worldwide take visitors into their homes for free, and provide safe, friendly environments for cultural exchange. Some hospitality groups are geared specifically to individual or women travelers — you stay with other women around the globe, for instance — while others cater to seniors, or gay or lesbian adventurers.

During my around-the-world, solo trip, I spent anywhere from two days to two weeks with more than 20 different host families, including a train conductor in New Zealand, students in

It's a good time to verify that your passport will not expire soon and to renew it if it will.

Indonesia, a doctor in Malaysia, a retired teacher in Thailand, and a shoemaker in India. These were, by far, some of the most profound experiences of my trip.

I arranged those homestays through **Servas**, a nonprofit, non-denominational, and nonpolitical peace organization. Started by American students in Denmark in 1949, Servas is active in more than 100 countries and aims to “build world peace, goodwill, and understanding” by getting people from different cultures and backgrounds together. Meet local hosts for a day or stay with them for up to two nights (or longer, if invited). To join Servas (www.usservas.org), pay a small annual fee and complete your interview remotely (through an online service). Then start connecting with

other members through new virtual meetups and virtual dinners.

Women Welcome Women, a non-profit, UK-based hospitality group, encourages and enables women worldwide to visit each other and, in the process, foster international friendships. More than 2,500 members, ranging from 18 to 90 years old, belong to the group. Membership fee runs about \$43 (www.womenwelcomewomen.org.uk). **Lesbian and Gay Hospitality Exchange International**, also a non-profit group, has more than 400 members who host gay and lesbian travelers in more than 28 countries throughout Africa, Asia, Oceania, and North, Central, and South America (www.lghei.org).

Or consider planning a trip to swap homes with someone around the world. **HomeExchange** (www.homeexchange.com) has more than 400,000 homes in 187 countries. Join now and become a part of HomeExchange's online community, where you can learn about destinations, gather ideas for future trips, and make meaningful connections with other like-minded travelers.

“With many travel companies and airlines offering special pricing and lenient cancellation policies, our advisers are encouraging clients to book their future travels now,” says Misty Belles of Virtuoso, a luxury and experiential travel network with more than 22,000 travel advisers worldwide.

Wherever your next adventure takes you, whether it's a walking holiday in Ireland or a dream cruise to Antarctica, I look forward to seeing you on the road.

Kari Bodnarchuk can be reached at travelwriter@karib.us. Follow her on Instagram at [@womenstravelguide](https://www.instagram.com/womenstravelguide).