

LIFESTYLE

Think the pros always travel smoothly? Think again. From causing an airport security panic to ending up in a Brazilian love motel, holiday plans can go wrong for anyone. Experts share their cautionary tales

Interviews: Hayley Spencer
Photography: Justin Metz

The unseasonal snowstorm
Cat Jones, founder of Byway, flight-free holiday agents
This spring, my family and I took the sleeper train from London to Rannoch Moor in the Scottish Highlands for a few nights. It's only accessible by train, is super-remote and there are no roads for 20 miles. One day, we set off to climb a nearby Munro - me, my husband and our six- and nine-year-olds. As we reached the summit, the weather closed in and we realised we might have made an error trekking to a place where no cars could rescue us. We found ourselves in near-whiteout conditions in the snow. To make matters worse, I had recently torn my knee ligament, and while low-impact hiking was good rehab, I was unable to traverse steep terrain, so we had to take the long way round to get back down - all the while the snow was getting deeper and the visibility worse. After several exhausting hours, including miles of carrying the six-year-old and endless shouts of "Are we nearly there yet?", we finally reached the bottom just as the sun came out. After hours of seeing no human life, we were rewarded by a train full of waving passengers passing along the track through the moor. Never again will I climb a mountain with an injury unless there is a shorter escape route!



“The bride-to-be arrived in tears. Her luggage had been lost in transit – with her wedding dress!”

Do expect unexpected weather for outdoor activities, and pack plenty of layers, a waterproof and food supplies, in case you get caught out. **Don’t** be put off going off-grid with your kids - you’ll have experiences you never would if travelling by car.

The getting very lost in translation
Lydia Swinscoe, travel writer
My first long-term backpacking trip was with my ex to South America. We hadn’t learned nearly enough Spanish or Portuguese beforehand, which resulted in a series of mini disasters, which were entirely of our own making. After crossing the border from Uruguay into Brazil, we bought bus tickets to Rio Grande, instead of Ilha Grande, near Rio de Janeiro (the two places are 1,200 miles apart). It meant we had to spend the night in the city of Pelotas in order to catch the correct bus the next day. The only place we could find was a pay-by-the-hour love motel with porn on every TV channel, carpeted walls, condoms and lube in the mini bar, and walls that were far too thin! Let’s just say we got out of there pretty sharpish the next morning, though we did end up getting to explore the world’s longest beach, which happened to be an hour’s drive away.

Do practise language basics before spending long periods in a country. Google Translate is helpful, but a phrase book will allow you to learn on the go. **Don’t** be too rigid in your plans. Travelling rarely goes without a hitch and is much more enjoyable if you can go with the flow.

The washout in the wild
Tom Cahalan, founder of Dorsia Travel, luxury travel agency
My wife and I were staying at a new safari camp in Botswana for a few days as part of a longer tour. On the last day, torrential rain suddenly hit. Our camp was in the vast Okavango Delta, which can be a risk in the rainy season - but this was supposed to be the dry season! Within minutes, water was coming in through the roof of our tent and it started to fill up. The only staff member on hand was a masseuse, who clearly had no experience trying to make a tent water tight. We tried to get hold of someone else by radio - the only mode of communication in most safari camps - but no one came, so we were left rushing around trying to keep our things dry until it finally stopped raining. Thankfully, nothing got too damaged, and we were leaving later that day, so escaped another night in soggy lodgings.

Do pay attention to the seasons when going on an adventure holiday. You might be unlucky, but your plans are less likely to be rained off if you opt for the right time of year. **Don’t** forget to check your travel insurance is suited to where you’re visiting. If there’s a risk of natural disaster or trip disruption due to extreme weather, make sure it’s on your policy.

The post-detox disaster
Madeleine Spencer, beauty and wellness editor
As a wellness journalist, I’m a dab hand at detox retreats and always heed the aftercare advice, but on one occasion, after spending 10 days at a clinic in Austria, I headed straight on to review a hotel in Italy. At the clinic, I’d been asked to eliminate sugar and caffeine, and advised to stick to simple-to-digest foods for a while afterwards. But on the first night at my new location, a Michelin-star chef served a succession of dishes full of cream and sugar, while the sommelier brought out a different wine to complement each course. Not only would it have been rude to refuse, but my job necessitated trying them, and so the post-detox rules went out the window, and I dutifully ate every plate of pasta and pudding laid before me.

Just 15 minutes after finishing the meal, my strappy shoes started to feel tight. Something was wrong. When I looked down, I saw my feet had ballooned so much that my ankles were no longer visible! Shocked, I messaged a doctor friend, who explained it was a reaction to the rich foods after an abstemious period. Belly laughing while trying to get free from my shoes, I realised it was snowing, so I staggered into a drift to soothe my painful feet, before sleeping with them raised on a mountain of pillows. Needless to say, I’ve never broken the exit rules of a detox since. **Do** always stick to the guidelines set by doctors if you’re doing a health retreat. In the case of a detox: always introduce new foods slowly afterwards. **Don’t** be afraid to ask hotel staff for assistance if you fall ill. They have a duty of care for guests and some have medical services on-call.

The 3am human alarm clock
Lucy Halfhead, travel editor
Dreaming of white sands and turquoise water, I thought St Lucia would be the perfect place to relax as new parents. In my excitement, what I failed to factor in was a punchy five-hour time difference. Night one: we get the baby down early and toast our

expert parenting with a piña colada. At 3.17am we’re woken by the strains of Baa, Baa, Black Sheep and rhythmic clapping. My daughter thinks it’s morning. Because according to her body clock, it is morning. And so began our daily routine: waking up before the crickets had even clocked off their night shift, tiptoeing around a silent resort with a wildly energetic toddler and watching the sunrise in a fog of sleep deprivation and insect repellent. On the final day, just as her body clock had adjusted, it was time to fly home - where she then, of course, stayed on St Lucia time for a week. **Do** ease into time zone changes, shifting your child’s naps and bedtimes by 15 to 30 minutes a day in the run-up to your trip. Alternatively, consider far-flung locations that are in the same or a similar time zone, such as Morocco or South Africa if you live in the UK. **Don’t** be put off travelling with kids. It can be hard work sometimes, but you’ll create precious memories.

The wedding dress drama
Josh Gardener, hotel director at Broadwick Soho
When I was head concierge at a famous London hotel, I had a bride flying in from New York ahead of her very elaborate wedding. She arrived in tears. Her luggage had been lost in transit - and it contained her wedding dress! Cue panic, with 48 hours until the ceremony. We called in many favours and had one of London’s best bridal stores make space in their schedule for an emergency appointment. Their team worked through the night making adjustments and delivered the dress to the hotel, where our valet team was on standby to steam it. But then, on the morning of the wedding, a man sauntered into the hotel holding her missing suitcase, which contained the original dress. To this day, I have no idea where he came from as we didn’t have time to ask. Ultimately, the replacement dress never saw the light of day. **Do** use AirTags so you have a way to locate lost luggage. Even if it doesn’t guarantee you get the bag back in time for your trip, you will be reunited with it eventually. **Don’t** pack any essential or irreplaceable items in your checked luggage, including jewellery and important items of clothing.

The not-so-smart suitcase saga
Isabella Quinn, account manager at Fox Communications PR
I had just wrapped a dreamy press trip in Bali. Everything went to plan - until the final hour. Just as our group was about to board the flight to Doha to catch a connecting flight to London, we got a call from security over the tannoy. One of the journalists’ smart suitcases had triggered a full-scale panic: it had a built-in charger pack - a serious no-go at Bali airport, where even devices in checked-in luggage must be switched off and their batteries removed. Cue a mad dash through security and passport control - running, sweating, clutching boarding passes - to locate the suitcase and somehow eject the battery from inside, which was quite a scramble considering the person in question had never removed it before. Not quite the farewell I’d envisioned, but we made the flight, just. **Do** know the specs on any smart tech you take on holiday, and how to eject and switch on/off any battery packs. **Don’t** forget to check that your luggage complies with local airline regulations on every leg of your flight. These can differ from airport to airport and country to country ●