

VBT Tour Planning Checklist

Thinking about travel, but not sure where to start? With a wealth of fantastic destinations, it can be hard to narrow down the field. To give you the inside edge, VBT put together this handy checklist—it can help you pick a destination, book your tour, and get ready to take that Big Trip of a lifetime.

Step 1: Ask Yourself These Questions to Find Your Dream Destination

There are so many great destinations out there, and it can be difficult to limit yourself to just one! If you're having a hard time picking that perfect destination for your next adventure, here are a few questions to help you build your shortlist:

- **What makes you feel good?** Maybe you love the feeling of pedaling under a lush canopy of leaves, or maybe it's the smell of salt sea air, or the tantalizing aroma of haute cuisine that bring you joy. Start by thinking of the most delicious, mouth-watering meal you can imagine. Picture it in your mind, then pick a destination that puts that meal on the table in front of you.
- **What makes you feel whole?** Wholeness comes from something that supports both body and soul. Start by thinking of a favorite novel or film that's close to your heart. Now picture it—including the sights, the sounds, the smells, the stories. Pick a destination that lets you walk in the footsteps of your favorite character.
- **What makes you grow as a person?** Transformative travel is about discovering a new world of passion and energy. Think about the people you want to share that energy with when you get home. Picture yourself showing them your vacation photos—then ask yourself what you want those photos to look like. Pick a destination that delivers that perfect snapshot.

Step 2: Narrow It Down with a Few Practical Questions

Once you have a short list of destinations, our experienced team of VBT Tour Consultants can help you narrow it down. These travel experts have the most up-to-date information about tour dates and availability, plus details that aren't on the VBT website. If there's a tour you have questions about, chances are a VBT Tour Consultant has been there! Here are a few questions to consider before you call:

- **Are your travel dates flexible?** If you have a specific travel window, VBT Tour Consultants can quickly find every available option for your chosen dates. They can also tell you about Self-Guided tours which you can take any time.
- **Do you have dietary restrictions?** Although gluten-free and vegetarian options are available on every tour, not all tours are created equal when it comes to variety. Our Tour Consultants can point you towards destinations with the best cuisine for your dietary needs.
- **What kind of terrain are you looking for?** You might be looking for a laid-back tour with gorgeous scenery and some light pedaling—or maybe you're up for some steep, hilly climbs. Whatever your pleasure, VBT Tour Consultants will give you the inside scoop on road and trail conditions, level of effort, sightseeing, and optional activities.

Step 3: Call a VBT Travel Expert to Get the Inside Scoop

Once you're on the phone with a VBT Tour Consultant, here are a few questions to ask:

- **How many spaces are left on the tours you like best?** If you have your heart set on a departure that's nearly booked, be sure to reserve your space before it sells out!
- **Has your VBT Tour Consultant been on this tour?** If not, they probably have a colleague who has! They can give you the real inside scoop from first-hand experience.
- **Are e-bikes available?** E-bikes are available on many tours—but they're popular and sell out fast. If e-bikes are on your list of must-haves, a VBT Tour Consultant can let you know where and when you can snag one.

Step 4: Manage Your To-Do List by Breaking It Down

Congratulations! You've picked a tour and booked your reservation—this is going to be a lot of fun! As the big day approaches, this final checklist will help you prepare:

3 to 6 Months Before Departing

- Let the adventure begin—learn all about your destination through books, films, and language-learning apps.
- For international trips, check your passport and renew if it expires within six months of your planned return date.
- If necessary, apply for a visa on your destination's embassy website.
- Consider a travel protection plan, like Trip Mate, to protect you and your trip investment.
- Begin training for your trip. It's a great reason to enjoy fresh air and exercise.

1 to 2 Months Before Departing

- Go shopping! Purchase gear for your trip and test it out.
- Let bank and credit card companies know you'll be traveling. Ask about international fees and card security.
- Want to text friends about a delicious seafood dish you had on tour? Check with your mobile service provider about an international data plan.
- Stock up on prescriptions, contact lens, spare glasses etc. Contact your health insurance company about coverage for international emergencies.
- Ensure your pets and your home are in good hands in your absence. Arrange for animal care, house sitting and yard maintenance.

1 Week Before Departing

- Get excited: it's the final countdown!
- Begin packing. Check your airline's carry-on restrictions and latest TSA security measures at [tsa.gov](https://www.tsa.gov) to avoid hassle at the airport.
- Download audio books, games for the flight, translators, maps, and secure calling and messaging apps like WhatsApp.
- Make copies of important travel documents.
- List the valuables you're bringing and photograph each one.
- Leave a copy of your itinerary with family or friends.

1 Day Before Departing

- Check into your flight online.
- No one wants to come home to a smelly kitchen—use your trip as an excuse to purge the fridge, take out the garbage, and give the counters and sink a quick clean.
- Power up! Remember to charge your electronics and batteries.
- Set out-of-office messages.
- Check destination forecast and adjust your packed items if needed.
- Water your houseplants... because they need love too.

