

# How To Travel The World For \$1.5k A Month

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69 Flares

I don't usually write about travel, but it has been an integral part of my life for the last two years, so I thought I would share a post about that this week.

For the last 22 months I've been traveling the world on my savings/earnings. I've been on over a dozen flights, visited 30+ countries, and slept in more beds than I care to count.

And believe it or not, I don't think it's over as of yet.

The most common question I'm asked is the one you are all probably asking now.

"How do I afford it?"

Many of us associate travel with overpriced, beach resorts or thousand dollar weekends in Paris. This mindset makes the very idea of long term travel appear unsustainable, unless you are willing to sell a few body parts or sleep under bridges.

However, I have the data and I am happy to share it here, so they can make up their own minds as to how feasible long-term travel really is.

So here it goes.

The cost of my trip during **12 months in 2013 comes in at about \$18k, or \$1.5k a month**. I could share the exact figure, but as I have assuredly missed a few items along the way I feel no need to give a false sense of accuracy.

Now, before we dive into the numbers, consider a few other things that I could have blown \$18k on.

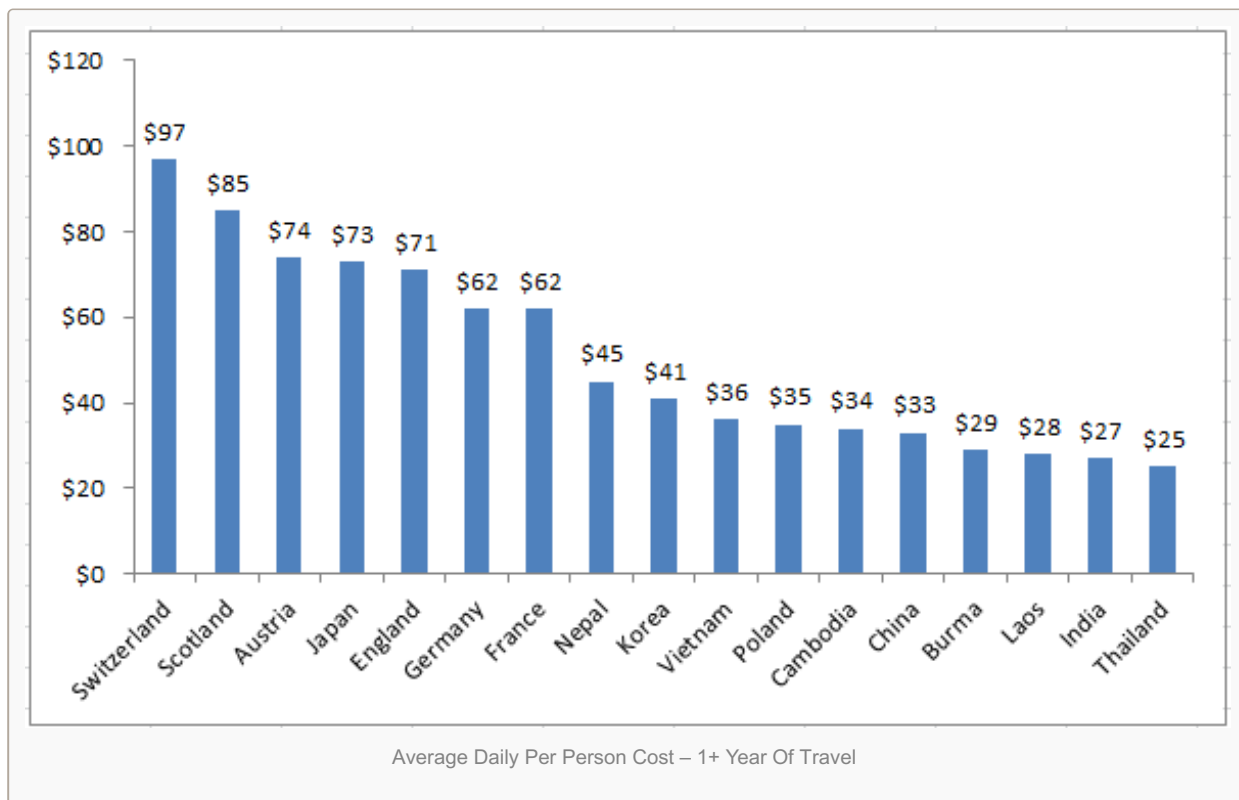
1. I could have just about bought [this Rolex watch](#) (Retail Price ~\$18.7k).
2. I could have had a "budget" wedding (Average couples spend [between \\$18900 and \\$31500](#)).
3. I could have bought a [Hyundai Veloster](#) (Retail Price ~\$18k)

Instead I chose the path less traveled, and [have been rewarded with a lifetime of experiences and memories](#).

## Digging Into The Numbers

Of course, a blanket number does not tell the whole story. For all we know, I did sell a few body parts and spend most of my nights sleeping under a bridge. So let's start by breaking down the numbers.

Firstly, **how do costs vary by country?**



Here is a chart showing the average daily per person costs for most of the countries I visited (not including Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia, which I visited in 2014).

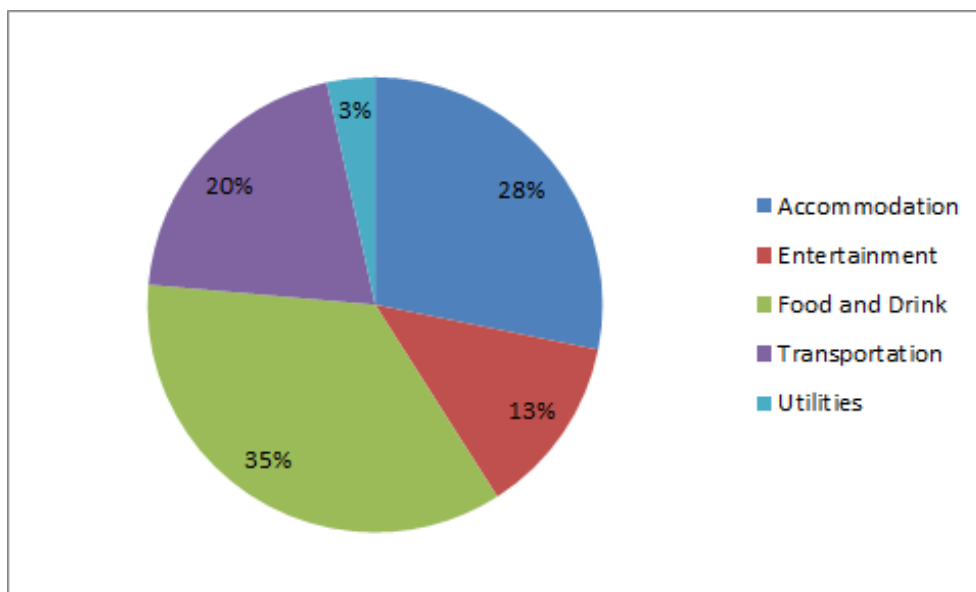
What is the take away here?

Well, if I am budgeting \$1,500 a month, that is \$50 a day. This means that everything to the right of France falls under budget, while everything to the left is over budget. To put it bluntly, if I mix in some things that are under budget with some things that are over budget, in the right proportions, I am at budget.

What also might be surprising, is that everything from France to Austria (what we typically think of as the budget killer countries) is not significantly over budget, and has a very realistic counterpart on the other side. 30 days in France, mixed with 30 days in Vietnam, and we are at budget.

Thus, if we are willing to be a bit adventurous and travel to countries in Asia (and South America, Eastern Europe, etc) we can quite easily make our budget.

You might be wondering, how this breaks down by category. Well, I have that data too.



The biggest expense by a long shot is food and drink. This is mainly because travel often involves eating out at restaurants due to lack of appropriate cooking facilities. Restaurants, especially in first world countries, can be expensive.

## But Did You Just Budget The Whole Time?

Traveling on a strict budget can be tiresome. It's one thing to share the costs of travel and claim that they aren't that high, and it's another to really convey the trip and what we did and convince you that it wasn't filled with cold showers, constant street food, and a lot of Couch Surfing.

The point is to enjoy yourself, after all.

But the bottom-line, honest truth, is that **we did just about everything we wanted to.**

If there was a museum, event, or tourist attraction we wanted to see; we went and saw it.

If there was a well known restaurant in the area we wanted to eat at, we ate there.

If there was a hostel with nice ratings and a good location, we booked it.

How you travel is very important, but where you travel really does play an important roll as well.

The fact of the matter is, outside of the Western world, **things are just not that expensive.**

If you are OK to skip the most luxurious accommodation or activities, you will easily fall under budget. You do not need the help of any "How To Travel The World For Less Than \$X" books. Of course, you can get those, and they will likely save you money, **but you don't have to to achieve these results.**

In fact, to achieve the results of everything that is shown to the right of France requires almost no budgeting at all. Mix that in with the left side of the graph in the appropriate proportion, and you have yourself a year long trip for \$18k.

## 5 Biggest Travel Saving Tips

Still, that does not mean that we weren't smart about our expenses. There's nothing wrong with [stretching a dollar here and there](#). However, instead of talking about all the little things you could do to save a buck, I want to discuss our five biggest wins. Implement these, and you will be on your way to a healthy budget.

1. **Travel With A Buddy** – There are awesome economies of scale the more people you travel with, particularly with transportation and accommodation. The entire time I have been traveling with my girlfriend, and we have benefited from shared cabs, shared private rooms, and shared groceries. Also, it is a lot more fun to travel with someone you know and like, so you aren't sacrificing anything.
2. **Rewards Credit Cards** – I have saved thousands of dollars in airplane and hotel fees by finding the [best rewards credit cards](#) and making sure I got my miles. If you have a big trip coming up, plan ahead, as the best cards often take a few months to kick in.
3. **Renting A Car** – We rented cars in France, Germany, and Scotland and it was an awesome decision every time. Car rentals aren't necessarily cheap, but relative to the cost and planning of buses and trains, plus the flexibility, they are well worth it. You can visit more places and go at your own pace. You also don't have to drag your luggage every which way.

4. **Long Term Apartment Rentals** – I love apartments while traveling because they give you that feeling of home even when you aren't actually at home. A popular site for apartment rentals is AirBnB. Just fool around with the dates for a bit and you will quickly see that there are some major discounts for long term rentals. In fact, renting an apartment for an entire month is likely to be half the average daily cost of renting an apartment for a few days. My girlfriend and I rented a nice, beachfront apartment with a pool and gym for only \$1k a month. Couple that with point #1 and you have a real deal and will come in well under budget for the month.
5. **Make Friends In Other Countries** - If you are traveling for an extended period of time, make friends with the other travelers. Firstly, because it's good to be friendly. But more practically, because you can hit them up later for free accommodation. While trekking in Burma we met about a dozen Europeans spread out across the continent. When the summer came we emailed them all and dropped the hint that we would be in the area. All of them who could offered us a place to stay.

There are many reasons why long term travel might not be feasible for you (or maybe, you just aren't interested, which is fine too). If there is one myth we can dispel, however, it's that the cost of long term travel is no more expensive than the cost of living in most places in the Western world.

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