

Tour Times

A publication from Mary Valentine Tours

July 2026

Dear Reader,

This month's issue contains part one of a two-part series of travel tips designed to help make your travel easier. You'll find six important tips that will reduce anxiety and help you cope with travel challenges.

So, whether you're leaving tomorrow, or not for six months, here are some items to pay attention to now.

Cheers,

Mary



Mary's Travel Tips (Part 1)

Tip 1:

Plan ahead, even if you're late getting started.

Create a notebook. Keep all your notes in one place. Use folders to keep confirmation emails, receipts, and itineraries (either paper or electronic).



WHAT'S INSIDE

Travel tips - including some new regulations for going to Great Britain and Europe.

MVT Book Club News

How To Join Our Tours



Decide where you want to go and how much you're willing to spend.

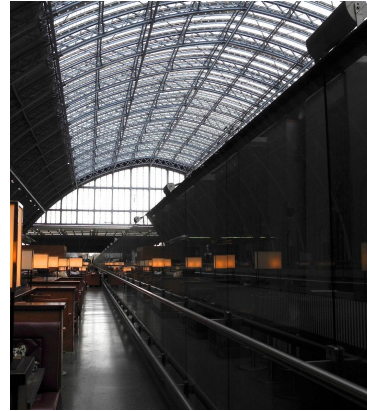
Decide if you want to travel solo, or with others, or as part of an organized tour.

Check how physically active you need to be for any tour you're considering.

Decide if you're going to drive to the places you plan to visit. If so, begin researching rental car companies and driving requirements in foreign countries.

Talk to friends about their experiences: what worked and what didn't.

Check travel websites and blogs for ideas and to hear first-hand accounts.



Tip 2:

Get your **passport** and **other travel requirements** in order.

If your passport expires less than six months after your planned return home, most countries won't let you enter. You will need to apply for a new passport **now**. If you need to, start the **renewal** process immediately. You can request **expedited** service, but you'll need to pay for it (\$60 approximately).

Remember that the United Kingdom now requires travelers from the US to register for an **ETA (Electronic Travel Authorization)**. You can apply online. There will be a charge of \$13.00. Check GOV.UK for details and instructions. You can also download the application at the App Store or Google Play.

As of September, 2026, if you're an American traveling to most locations in **Europe** you will need to have made application for an **ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorization System)**. Check [ETIAS Requirements for American Citizens | ETIAS Countries](#) for details and an application. There is a fee for this.

Tip 3:

Once you've booked your flight, **buy travel insurance** – a must.

Compare prices and coverage. All policies are not alike. Spend some time making decisions about insurance to determine the type and amount of insurance you need. You may find it helpful

to check forbes.com “Best Travel Insurance 2026”.

Tip 4:

Begin by researching **places to stay**. Explore options, including hotels, b and bs, hostels, or campgrounds. Decide on a standard, e.g., 4 and 5-star hotels, and how much you’re willing to pay. Read the reviews. Compare prices. Sometimes a bargain isn’t a bargain. Look at the maps showing where a location is compared with places you want to see. A beautiful hotel at a bargain price 20 miles from town is no bargain if you need to hire a taxi every time you go out.

Tip 5:

Think about safety before, during, and after you travel.

Keep your passport **safe**. Losing your passport can spoil even the best vacations. To minimize the headache of getting a new one while in a foreign county, consider the following:

- Take a photo of your passport and save it on your camera.
- Carry multiple photocopies stored in separate pieces of luggage.
- If you want to carry your passport with you everywhere, consider using a belt bag.

Hold onto **old passports**. If you dump your expired passport into the trash, your information might fall into the wrong hands and become an identity theft issue. Keeping an expired passport may also make it easier to obtain your next one. For example, you can hand it in along with your application for a new one. You’ll get it back quicker. The US Department of State advises people hold onto old passports, particularly if they used an old passport for a still-valid visa to use when going to a specific country.

And...hold on to your **boarding passes**.

Did you know that your boarding pass contains a lot of private information, including your full name, flight routes, frequent flyer account numbers, and airline loyalty records? The website msn.com reports that hackers are becoming skilled at using the information on your boarding pass to change your flights and hijack your airline account. They’ve been known to steal your frequent flyer points and use them to book their own flights and hotel rooms. We know it's old school, but we like to print our boarding passes in case the phone fails (dead battery, no signal, etc.)

Once you’re home, don’t rush to throw away those passes. You may need them to document frequent flyer mile discrepancies or to prove you were on a particular flight. Once any discrepancies are sorted, feel free to throw away paper passes and erase any digital passes on your phone.

Tip 6:

How Not to Look Like a Tourist: Respect traditions and customs of your host country.

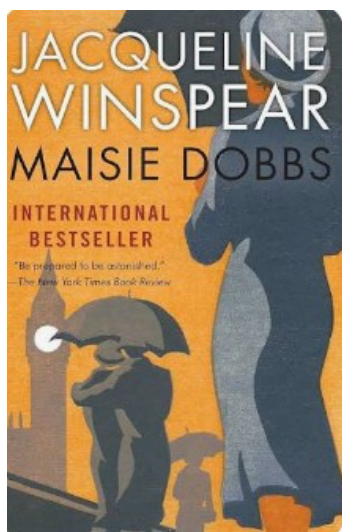
In the UK that includes:

- Standing on the right in lifts (elevators) and stairs. Walk on the left.
- Joining the queue. No cutting in line or rushing to the front of the line.
- Letting people off the tube or out of the lift before trying to get on.
- Modulating your voice when in public spaces.
- Listening to others.

Book Club Update

On July 18th, book club members shared their impressions of Joanna Trollope's **The Choir**. Set in the 1980s, it tells the story of a power struggle in a small English community known for its boys choir. Our hour together found us discussing the book's characters plot, and location, as well as debating the merits of the story's ending. We also spent a few minutes evaluating the significance of social class in the book's plot.

You're welcome to join us for our next meeting via Zoom. Let us know of your interest by dropping us a line, and we'll add you to our book club mailing list.



The Book Selection for the October 2026 Book Club

Set in London and Kent, England, in the 1920s, our October book focuses on the life and adventures of Maisie Dobbs. Trained as a nurse, Maisie has recently left her nursing life to set up shop as a private investigator. This book takes you with Maisie as she investigates a complex and challenging case.

In the aftermath of the Great War, a former officer has created a working farm known, as The Retreat, that acts as a convalescent refuge for ex-soldiers too shattered to resume normal life. When Fate brings Maisie a second case involving The Retreat, she must finally confront a ghost that has haunted her for over a decade.

Our September 2026 Tour

London - Bath -- Liverpool -- Manchester -- Leicester -- English countryside -- and more

Check out the full itinerary for the upcoming September 2026 tour on our website.
We will soon be posting the 2027 tours we have planned as well.

How to Join Us:

Cost: \$6650; deposit: \$500. This covers 4- and 5-star hotels for ten nights, ten breakfasts, nine dinners, an afternoon tea, transportation, tickets and entry fees plus a photo album of our adventures from the tour.



To reserve a spot, send us a \$500 deposit (non-refundable) now to hold your space. The balance is due no later than 20 days before the tour begins.

Send deposit to: Mary Valentine Tours 15030 Ventura Blvd. #456 Sherman Oaks, CA 91403 747.998.5630 (office); 323.868.6394 (mobile)

About Mary Valentine

Tour leader Mary Valentine has been a Sociology professor and a life-long Anglophile. For more than 35 years, she has traveled extensively throughout the UK and led tours there since 2007.

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