

# SECRETS FOR TRAVEL SURVIVAL



OVERCOMING  
THE OBSTACLES TO  
ACHIEVING PRACTICAL  
TRAVEL FUN

## Introduction: Why Should You Read My Book?

Murder, maiming, smuggling, counterfeiting. I've seen it. On the side of the law, I've been a part of it, in a very real sense. There's a verse in the bible I like in which God says, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life ..." (Deuteronomy 30:19). I have chosen life and blessing. For me, part of life and blessing has been travel, and in this book I'm sharing part of that joy.

The opening vignette of the first chapter characterizes many of my journeys, and I'll share more of those to illustrate some of the points I'll make, but first let me tell you a little about my background.

I'm not a travel agent. I have nothing to do with the travel business. I'm just a traveler. I've traveled extensively, under a variety of conditions, using many, many different modes and over several different continents. I know about travel. I know how to make travel more—much more—enjoyable. And by reading and using this book, you'll be able to share some of the accumulated wisdom I've garnered over the years.

When I was a child, my Southern California family took frequent vacation trips by automobile, traveling into adjacent states. When I was fifteen, we made our first trip to Hawaii, flying on an airline called the Flying Tigers. Until just before we made our trip, this airline had been a freight airline composed of pilots from the world-famous Flying Tigers air unit (<http://www.flyingtigersvideo.com/>) and had the best safety record in the airline industry at that time, never having had a crash. That fact was very important to my father, who organized this trip.

We traveled on one of their Super Constellations, and although it was one of the fastest airliners at the time, the flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu was over eight hours, a distance of about 2,500 miles. Today, most people only see propeller airplanes on short commuter hops.

That eight hours was nothing compared to our next trip, which was to Europe, where we spent eight weeks visiting eight different countries. That jaunt, again aboard a Super Constellation, took thirty-six hours from Los Angeles to Shannon Airport in Ireland, with stops in Washington DC, Labrador, and Newfoundland to accommodate some needed engine maintenance. But more about that later.

I became a policeman at age twenty-one. I graduated first in the academy. While still in training—and then after graduating—I was assigned to the Vice Division, working undercover on gambling, liquor-violation, and sex-predator cases. I went from there to the Patrol Division, to a special patrol unit in the troubled inner city. After that, I went to the Juvenile Division ... perhaps the most difficult and discouraging assignment as a policeman. Then I was recruited into the FBI, and I became a special agent.

As a policeman, I had become a firearms instructor. And as a former full-time policeman, I was something of an anomaly in the FBI. It was unusual for a new FBI agent to go right to work in “meaty” criminal matters, but such was my assignment. I began working fugitive matters and interstate auto theft.

I was then sent to a world-renowned language school located in Monterey, California—the U.S. Department of Defense’s Defense Language Institute, West Coast, where I learned Spanish, again graduating first in the program. Besides a copy of Don Quixote in Spanish, my reward was a limited choice of assignment, and so I chose the Phoenix Division. There, I continued to work criminal cases. Surprisingly, there were few cases involving my use of Spanish.

I attended several specialized schools, where I was again certified as a firearms and defense tactics instructor, and I was sent to the first undercover school ever offered by the FBI. At that point in its history, the FBI did no undercover work. Back in Phoenix, I transferred to the Tucson Resident Agency, part of the Phoenix Division, and I then moved into working organized crime; however, with my strange combination of training, I was still called upon to go after fugitives and was involved with an occasional Spanish-speaking case.

After six years with the FBI, I went to work for a newly formed state agency in Arizona that was concentrating its efforts on working against organized crime and the a multi-state, federally funded agency, but I continued working very closely with several of my former FBI agent friends. After a successful three-year-long investigation of Joseph Bonanno, one of the original five Mafia family leaders (considered to have been “the Godfather”), I began traveling extensively, not only among the multiple states that comprised our agency but also to also Washington DC. There, I testified for budgets for our agency, and in front of investigative committees such as the Senate Judiciary Committee.

After five years, I left that state agency and was immediately contacted by the local ABC television affiliate to make a documentary special regarding the Bonanno investigation. For several months, we worked on that special, traveling to several cities on the East Coast of the United States and to Montreal, Canada. We ended up producing a one-hour television special, which won the Arizona Associated Press documentary of the year award.

From there I started my own consulting business, and since then, I’ve traveled not only to Canada and Mexico but also to Europe several times, and to most of the Latin American countries. I’ve consulted with major corporations and wealthy individuals, and the work included major thefts and the

investigation of counterfeit products, especially those made in China and being shipped to Latin America.

My business hasn't been travel, yet I've traveled extensively because my business has included travel. I've had great fun doing so, and I've learned much. Most of you won't ever travel as much as I have, but wouldn't it be nice to take a trip and when you've returned home, feel quite satisfied with the experience?

When I first started traveling, I'd invariably return home and say, "I wish I'd ..." or "If I go again, next time I'll ..." No trip is ever perfect. There's always something that could be better. I want your trip to be a truly fond memory. If that means "productive," then so be it.

In any event, read along, and travel along with me. I promise this journey will enhance your future travel.

## Chapter One

### Why I Can Give You Advice

"You've got to help me !!" This was a real call from a frantic mother, and it was the nightmare of every parent. Her voice trembled, and she could just barely get the words out. "My son is a boat captain sailing in Mexican waters. He's been arrested for murder and is in prison in Veracruz. He was arrested just a few days ago. I just learned about it. The newspapers are calling him a jackal, and he's going to be sentenced within the next thirty days. I think he may be being tortured. I don't know if he has an attorney, and I don't know what to do. I need you to get down there right away and see if you can help."

My partner had called me early one morning. He was the head of a law enforcement agency in one of the southeastern states.



This woman had contacted the attorney general of one of the southeastern states, who in turn had contacted my partner. I was friends with the chief federal prosecutor of Mexico, and with a number of the heads of state police agencies there. I spoke Spanish, and by that time, I had traveled extensively in Mexico and knew my way around. The rule of life there was simple and clear: don't ever get arrested in Mexico!

The laws of Mexico are based on the Napoleonic code, which is quite different from U.S. constitutional law ... way, way different, especially as applied by Mexico. As far as the American is concerned, procedures are quite different and can seem very arbitrary. Time was of the essence. I knew that in such a situation, it was imperative to get to work within the first twenty-four hours of an arrest. Here, thirty days had already passed.

It was January, and we hastily made our arrangements through a travel agency, agreeing to meet in Dallas and then travel together to Mexico City, and from there to Veracruz. What happened next is part of the reason that I decided to write something about travel.

When we got to Mexico City, we found out that our travel agent hadn't worked out the details for our connecting flight to Veracruz and had not actually confirmed our passage, or so we were told. We found out that if we wanted to make it to Veracruz within the next day, we'd have to take a bus!

That ride, taken a number of years ago, is still vivid in my memory. Now it's a fond one. It was a lengthy delay in a rather urgent journey. It's only about two hundred miles from Mexico City to Veracruz—by air, maybe an hour. By bus? It's over the Sierra Madre mountain range, passing through multiple villages along the way: a six- to eight-hour drive ... depending.

I don't know how old the bus was, but it was at the very least beat, if not "mechanically challenged." We were the only norteamericanos among the ten-too-many passengers, but out of politeness and humility, we were offered seats ... a treasured provision! In fact, the passengers were extremely gracious and of good humor. Based on their demeanors, I had to imagine that many made this trip regularly.

Along the way, we picked up and dropped off passengers with chickens and goats. We got to see rural Mexican life in all of its delightful rawness. We drove into the evening, and even in mild Mexican winter weather, it soon grew quite cold. Our jackets were packed and under the bus. Our shivering was noticeable, and fairly soon, the kind Mexican passengers offered us several newspapers, which we saw they were using to cover themselves as they made that cold nighttime journey in an unheated bus. There we sat on a packed Mexican bus, covered with newspapers, bouncing along through the Sierra Madre mountains, making our way east to the coastal city of Veracruz ... listening to soft clucking of caged chickens.

We met with the accused in the Vera Cruz prison...not a place to which you want to travel! Now, I mention all of this for several reasons. The first is to describe the extent and variety of my travel. You'll also find that it has included a mixture of contacts with business and government entities and criminals, with a sprinkling of personal touring thrown in.

Because there has been a lot of quasi-police work in my travels, I've had contact with, and even made personal friends with, customs personnel, heads of foreign police agencies, street police officers, attorneys general of several countries, directors of federal customs agencies, corporate leaders, and—the most important—local citizens.

Through my contact with each of them, I've learned a great deal about the ins and outs of travel. I've experienced wrong bookings and wrong flights, been searched and pulled out of line and searched again, and had every item of my luggage taken out; on the other hand, I've also been escorted through the entire customs and immigration processes, and I've been simply waved through searches ... but I've never lost any luggage!

I've stayed in some of the finest luxury hotels, slept in cots in facilities with no plumbing at all, and eaten in the finest restaurants and also from pushcarts on the sides of rural neighborhood roads.

Under normal circumstances, no sane person would ever consider such carts as providing food fit for human consumption.

I've not suffered from any travel-related disease; I've not had adverse effects from eating local food, and in months of travel and living in (for instance) Mexico, I've never had the famous "Montezuma's revenge" (affectionately known as *Entamoeba histolytica*). As a general rule, I don't take preventative travel vaccinations, though there are clear exceptions; I've not found it necessary to take any for the last ten years of travel. I've never been lost for more than a few minutes, I've rarely been disoriented, and I have always garnered great bonus memories from my unexpected meanderings.

Fear should not be a component of traveling, either in the preparation or in the actual going. With the application of some common sense, some wisdom, and good preparation, you'll be able to have the pleasure of seeing, learning about, and relating to other peoples and their cultures. You'll be able to conduct business more effectively.

Let's walk through some planning and travel together.