

# The New York Times

## Travel Tips From Six U.S. Open Tennis Stars

Venus and Serena Williams, Rafael Nadal and more share their best tips to sleeping on long flights, the best getaways you may not expect, and the things they'll never leave home without.



From left, Nick Kyrgios, Serena Williams, Venus Williams, Alexander Zverev, Rafael Nadal and Mischa Zverev in New York. Michael Loccisano/Getty Images

**By Shivani Vora**

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The [United States Open tennis tournament](#) may have been the event that brought names like Serena Williams, Venus Williams, Rafael Nadal and Nick Kyrgois to New York City, but it was badminton that brought them to [The 4th annual Palace Invitational](#), a trio of matches where the tennis stars tried their hand at the sport.

Each of the players, along with Mischa Zverev and his brother, Alexander “Sascha” Zverev, also competing in the U.S. Open, spoke at the event about their travel essentials, the destinations they’ve visited that most surprised them, and even offered a few tips for better sleep on airplanes. Here are their answers, lightly edited.

### Rafael Nadal, 32

*Is there one thing you rely on to get through your hectic travel schedule?*

It helps a lot of have my family, friends and girlfriend around me. They make me feel less homesick.

*What’s your top piece of advice to anyone who wants to or travels as much as you do?*

When you're traveling, there are always issues that can happen so you need to be relaxed and understand that sometimes things won't go perfectly. There can be delays, for example. For me, catching flight connections can be a problem, and I can get annoyed, but when I stay calm, I feel less bothered by what's going on.

*Do you have any tips for how to sleep well on a plane?*

I don't sleep on planes. Well, not very often.

*What's the most surprising destination you've ever visited? Or, what's your favorite destination?*

The Exumas in the Bahamas are my favorite. The colors of the water and the islands are beautiful. I am from a very beautiful island myself [Mallorca], but every time I visit the Exumas — and I've been a couple of times — I'm surprised by their beauty.

## Venus Williams, 38

*Is there one thing you rely on to get through your hectic travel schedule?*

Books. I am an ebook reader because I don't want to travel with any extra weight. I read a lot of fantasy books. I am a big kid. Right now, I am not reading anything. I need suggestions!

*What advice do you have for anyone who travels as much as you do (or wants to)?*

Don't think about the travel. Sometimes you know it's going to take you 30 hours to get to where you're going, but don't think about the 30 hours. Just go.

*What's your No. 1 travel essential?*

My dog, Harold. He is a Havanese and is 11. I take him with me almost everywhere. When he's not there, I forget that he isn't. I think that he's on my bed or following me. He's like my shadow.

*Do you have any tips for how to sleep well on a plane?*

Go to sleep when you're sleepy. Or, stay up the night before and have some fun. When you get on the plane, you will sleep.

*Have any destinations surprised you?*

Norway. I didn't realize how unbelievable it would be. I went there on an impromptu vacation in July and hadn't heard anything about it. I went to Alesund, which is one of the smaller cities and Geirangerfjord, which is one of the famous fjords. That's all I had time for because I was only there for two days. It was so beautiful. The water was crystal clear, and the air was super fresh. I drove everywhere when I was there.

## Serena Williams, 36

*Can you name your No. 1 travel essential?*

I have a blanket that's soft and keeps me warm. I would also say my computer because I can watch TV shows on it. I'm always watching new programs.

*Do you have any tips for how to sleep well on a plane?*

I am actually open to tips. I used to not have a hard time sleeping on planes, but ever since I had Olympia [her daughter], that's changed.

## **Nick Kyrgios, 23**

*Is there one thing you rely on to get through your hectic travel schedule?*

Music is an essential for me. I like hip-hop and R&B. When I'm so far away from home, like now when I have been on the road for four months straight, my music is a go-to. My PlayStation is also essential.

*What's your top piece of advice to anyone who travels as much as you do (or wants to)?*

Be ready for anything. You're living out of suitcases and in hotel rooms, and it's important to be flexible. It can be hard being away from your family and friends, but remember that you're also very blessed because you're seeing all these beautiful places and meeting new people.

*Do you have any tips for how to sleep well on planes?*

You can take some melatonin. Or try not to sleep too much the night before. That's what I do so when I get on the plane, I just sort of lay back and watch movies and sleep. But I would say not to force sleep. It will come when it will come.

*What's the most surprising destination you've ever visited? Or, what's your favorite destination?*

I wouldn't say that anywhere has surprised me, but my most favorite place, apart from Australia, is anywhere in the States. It sort of feels like home to me, especially since I am a massive fan of the NBA.

## **Mischa Zverev, 31 and Alexander "Sasha" Zverev, 21**

*Is there one thing you rely on to get through your hectic travel schedules?*

**Mischa:** Our dog, Loevic. He is actually our mom's dog, but since our mom always travels with us, he's ours, too. He's a miniature poodle, and it doesn't matter what mood I'm in or what stress I'm going through when I'm traveling — whenever I see him, my spirits are lifted.

**Sasha:** I love having Loevic around, but having all my family with me, including Mischa, always helps when I'm on the road.

*What's your top piece of advice to anyone who travels as much as you do (or wants to)?*

**Mischa:** Travel with fun people. If there are flight delays or any hassles, at least you're surrounded by people who will entertain you. You'll never get too bored or frustrated. Sasha and I travel with a lot of great people — our family, our coaches and sometimes, friends.

*Can you each name your No. 1 travel essential?*

**Mischa:** A good phone that has long lasting battery power. Whenever I want to get in touch with friends or call a cab or listen to music, my phone does the job.

**Sasha:** Definitely a phone, but also a PlayStation.

*Do you have any tips for how to sleep well on a plane?*

**Sasha:** You get on it and start sleeping. I have no problem sleeping on planes. I can sleep anywhere.

**Mischa:** Exhaust yourself before getting on board. When you get on, you'll hopefully just crash out.

*What are your favorite destinations?*

**Mischa:** I love the Maldives the most — the water, the colors, the scenery. They're amazing.

**Sasha:** The Maldives a favorite for me, too. Mischa and I went together last year, but I've also been on my own.