

The Traveler • Rules

Source: <https://tablepress.space/the-traveler/rules/> · Rebuilds with the site.

The Traveler — Rules

> Broke & free. Every card is a place you could go, and the money you spend to get there. Work the streets, chase the wonders, and keep enough for the flight home. Rival backpackers in your region take a cut of your pay.

2–4 players · 25 minutes · ages 8+ · 52 cards

1. Components

52 place cards, plus 8 player aids (print page 8). Nothing else.

Each card is in one of four regions. Each region has a shape as well as a name, so color is never needed: ▲ Americas · ■ Europe · ● Africa & Middle East · ♦ Asia & Pacific.

Each region has 13 cards:

- 8 Cities. Each one hires one skill: Photo, Deliver, Guide, or Busk. Each City is worth 1 stamp. You can work in a City.
- 5 Wonders (★). Canyons, falls, reefs, mountains. They are worth 2 to 6 stamps, but nobody hires at a waterfall. You cannot work in a Wonder.

Every card shows a fare (top right). That is what it costs to go there.

2. Setup (one minute)

1. Shuffle. Deal 4 cards to each traveler.
2. Each traveler picks one City from their hand and places it face up in front of them. That is the first stop on their trip. (No City in your hand? Show it, shuffle it back, and take 4 new cards.)
3. Turn one card face up next to the deck. That is the Swap Shelf.
4. Whoever slept in the strangest place goes first. Play goes to the left.

3. Goal

Collect the most stamps on your trip, then get home.

4. Your turn

Earn cards, then you may travel.

1. Earn (pick one):

- Work (only if your last stop is a City). Take 1 card, plus 1 for every card on your trip with this City's skill. This City counts, so work always pays at least 2. Before you take your pay, each rival whose last stop is in your region takes 1 card from the deck. That is their cut. You always keep at least 1.
- Scrounge. Take 2 cards. Then put any 1 card from your hand on top of the Shelf.

Whenever you take a card, take it from the deck or take the top card of the Shelf.

2. Travel (if you want): play one place from your hand onto the end of your trip. Pay its fare with other cards from your hand. Put them on top of the Shelf, one at a time. You choose the order, so you choose what your left-hand neighbor sees on top.

- Flying: if the new place is in a different region from your last stop, pay 2 more.
- Your newest card is always your last stop. That is where you are.

3. Hand limit: hold at most 8 cards. Put extra cards on the Shelf.

The deck runs out? Shuffle the Shelf into a new deck. Leave its top card where it is.

5. How it ends

The game ends at the end of a round (when the player to the right of the first player finishes their turn) if either of these happened:

- someone's trip has 8 stops, or
- Last call: the deck ran out for the second time, or someone had to take a card and there was nothing to take.

Then everyone flies home: pay 3 cards. Can't pay? You call home for help: lose 3 stamps.

6. Scoring

Add the stamps on your trip. If your trip has all four regions, add 3 (the Grand Tour). Most stamps wins. Tie: most cards left in hand. Still tied: share the win and plan a trip together.

Then read your trip out loud, left to right. That's your story.

7. Sample turn (annotated)

Ana's trip: Lisbon → Prague . Her last stop is Prague (Europe, Photo). Bo's last stop is Paris (also Europe). Cam is in Tokyo.

1. Earn. Ana works in Prague. Two cards on her trip: pay is $1 + 2 = 3$. Bo is in Europe, so Bo takes 1 card from the deck first. Ana keeps 2. She takes the deck's top card and the Shelf's top card (Santorini).
2. Travel. Santorini is in Europe, fare 3, worth 3 stamps. Same region, so no flight. She pays with Barcelona, Hanoi, then Zion Canyon. Zion ends up on top. Bo is a busker in Paris, and he would have loved Barcelona. Now it's buried.
3. The price: next turn Ana stands on a Wonder. She can't work, so she will scrounge, and Bo is now earning in Europe without her. That's the trade: 3 stamps now, or a third City and a pay of 4.

8. FAQ and edge cases

- Can I just stay? Yes. Traveling is optional. Earning is not, but Scrounge is always allowed, so every turn has a legal move.
- I can't afford anything. Stay. Next turn, Scrounge or Work.
- My hand is empty. Scrounge: take 2, put 1 back. You're back in the game.
- I'm on a Wonder. You can't work. Scrounge, then fly or walk to a City when you can pay.
- Two rivals in my region? Each takes 1, in turn order to your left, but you always keep at least 1. If your pay is 2, only the first rival gets a cut.
- Does a rival on a Wonder take a cut? Yes. They're in your region, looking for work.
- The deck and the Shelf are both empty. That's Last call. Finish the round.
- Two people want to act at once? Nobody acts out of turn. The only off-turn event is a cut, and the worker deals it out.
- Kingmaking: at the end, you can't give stamps away. The only gift is the top of the Shelf, and everyone sees it.
- Can I go back to a region? Yes. The 2 extra is about your last stop, not your history.
- Can I go to the same place twice? No. There is only one of each card.
- Running away? The leader's region is the richest place to stand. Park your trip there and take their cut.

9. Two players

Same rules. The cut matters less, so the Shelf matters more. Watch what you leave on top.

10. Accessibility

- Color is never needed. Region = shape + word. Skill = icon + word. Wonder = ★ + word.
- Reading: every card is short sentences an 8-year-old can read aloud. Numbers are digits 1-6.
- Load: a hand of 4-8 cards. Your trip is face up, so your past is never something you have to remember.
- One hand: your hand can sit face down in a stack. Your trip lies flat on the table.
- Kids at the table: the turn is two words, earn, travel. A younger player can skip the Shelf-order trick and

still play well.

Print instructions

Open `print.html` in a browser and print it on US Letter at 100% scale (A4 works at "fit to page," about 96%).

- Pages 1–6: 52 card faces, 9 per page. Page 6 holds 7.
- Page 7: card backs. Print it on the reverse of the face pages, or print 6 copies and sleeve each back against its face. Penny sleeves with an old playing card inside make the cards shuffle like a real deck.
- Page 8: player aids, 4 turn cards and 4 end-and-scoring cards. One of each per player. They are not part of the deck.
- Cut on the card borders. Rounded corners are optional.

To change the deck, edit `build.mjs`, then run `node src/games/the-traveler/build.mjs`. It rewrites `deck.json` and `print.html`, and the Table Lab engine reads the same `deck.json`.

Human playtest protocol

Hypothesis you could lose: By the third round of a first game, at least one player will choose Scrounge over Work specifically because a rival in their region would take a cut. They will say so out loud, or physically fly away from that rival. If no one at two out of three first-time tables does this by round 3, the cut is not readable as interaction. Then make the worker say "cut" and hand the card over, or drop the cut and make the Shelf the spice.

Second hypothesis: Games end in 18–28 minutes after the teach, and at least one player says "one more turn" during the final round because of the 3-card flight home.

Observer: watch without helping. Write down what players did separately from what they said. Log each Wonder visit and the turn number, each cut, and each time someone stays with 4 or more cards in hand.

Accessibility watch: the cut happens on someone else's turn. Watch the youngest player. Do they remember to take their cut, or does the worker have to deal it? If the worker deals it at most tables, write that into the rules.