100 TRAVEL IDIOMS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

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FLOAT ONE'S BOAT

Meaning: to make someone happy, excited or interested in something.

Use In A Sentence: I don’t really want to go to Europe, but whatever floats your boat.
TO JUMP SHIP

Meaning: to suddenly stop doing something.

Use In A Sentence: Joe was doing well on the project until he suddenly jumped ship without telling anyone.
Meaning: a person’s pattern of thoughts or sequence of thoughts on a matter.

Use In A Sentence: I was making great progress until Mary came into my room and then I lost my train of thought.
TO STEP IT UP A GEAR

Meaning: to work on something more effectively or with more energy than previously.

Use In A Sentence: If you want this business to grow, you need to step it up a gear and start advertising.
RIGHT UP ONE'S ALLEY

Meaning: if something is up one’s alley it means it is something that appeals to them.

Use In A Sentence: I didn’t like that movie, but I think it would be right up Amy’s alley. She likes romantic movies.
JUST THE TICKET
Meaning: exactly what is needed or wanted.

Use In A Sentence: That ham and cheese sandwich was just the ticket for lunch. I feel so much better now that I ate something.
A MILE A MINUTE

Meaning: very fast.

Use In A Sentence: I can’t keep up with Keith. He walks a mile a minute.
BAD NEWS TRAVELS FAST

Meaning: bad news travels fast because people like to talk about these sorts of things.

Use In A Sentence: How does everyone know that I got in trouble at school? Bad news travels fast I guess.
TO TRAVEL LIGHT
Meaning: to travel with very little luggage or baggage.
Use In A Sentence: I always try to travel light because I hate having to check in my luggage at the airport.
Meaning: to travel to a place that isn’t well known or visited often by others.

Use In A Sentence: I wanted to visit this lake on top of the mountain. It a little bit off the beaten track, but I heard it is beautiful.
NECK OFF THE WOODS

Meaning: an area or neighborhood nearby.

Use In A Sentence: Hello Tom, tomorrow I am going to be up in your neck of the woods. Would you like to grab a cup of coffee?
TO BE RUNNING ON FUMES

Meaning: to continue to do something even though one is extremely tired or lacking energy/enthusiasm.

Use In A Sentence: We were running on fumes by the time we walked into our hotel room, but it was totally worth the trip up the mountain.
TO COVER ONE'S TRACK

Meaning: to hide one's trail or footprints so as not to be followed.

Use In A Sentence: We need to be careful to cover our tracks because I don’t want Mom finding out that we came up here.
TO LOSE TRACK OF SOMEONE OR SOMETHING

Meaning: to forget about someone/something. To misplace something. To lose contact with a person or friend.

Use In A Sentence: I’ve lost track of how many times we’ve traveled to Europe.
TO BE ON TRACK

Meaning: to do something as scheduled or planned.

Use In A Sentence: If we can get to New Mexico by tonight, we will be right on track to get to Las Vegas by Wednesday.
TO HAVE A ONE TRACK MIND

Meaning: to be fixated about one particular topic.

Use In A Sentence: Fred has a one-track mind. All he ever talks about is sports.
TO GO OFF THE RAILS

Meaning: used to describe a person that starts to behave strangely or uncontrollably.

Use In A Sentence: I don’t know what happen to grandma. She started to go off the rails when she turned 65 years old.
AT A GOOD CLIP

Meaning: quick or at a fast pace.

Use In A Sentence: Wow we climbed that mountain at a good clip. It is only 11:30.
A REDEYE FLIGHT

Meaning: a late-night flight. Usually, one that leaves really late at night and arrives early the next morning.

Use In A Sentence: George caught a redeye flight from California to New York.
TO THE FLY THE SEAT ONE'S PANTS

Meaning: to rely on your judgment to do something that you have never done before.

Use In A Sentence: Rather than sit down and think about something, Mary likes to fly by the seat of her pants and figure it out as she goes.
TO FLY UNDER THE RADAR

Meaning: to do something without being noticed.

Use In A Sentence: Mark is a quiet person. He likes to fly under the radar and hope that nobody notices him.
ROAD TRIP

Meaning: a trip taken by car.

Use In A Sentence: My wife and I hope to go on a road trip around the country before we are 30 years old.
TO BE AT A CROSSROADS

Meaning: to be at a point where a decision has to be made.

Use In A Sentence: After graduating from school, I am at a crossroads. I want to make the best decision for my future.
TO CIRCLE THE WAGONS

Meaning: to become defensive.

Use In A Sentence: Don’t circle your wagons. I am not accusing you of anything. I am just trying to find out what happened so that we can prevent it from happening again.
TO BE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Meaning: to be in control of a situation; to be in charge.

Use In A Sentence: The company seems to be doing better ever since Jeff has been in the driver’s seat.
TO BE IN THE SAME BOAT

Meaning: to be in the same situation or problem as somebody else.

Use In A Sentence: John and Mary are in the same boat. They both don’t like their jobs, but they are too afraid to quit.
TO JUMP/LEAP/CLimb ON THE BAND WAGON

Meaning: to start to follow something after it has become popular.

Use In A Sentence: A few years ago, no one liked the Patriots. Now that they are winning, it seems like everyone is jumping on the bandwagon.
TO PUT THE BRAKES ON SOMEONE OR SOMETHING

Meaning: to slow down or to stop some progress.

Use In A Sentence: I don’t know why Jim decided to put the brakes on his business idea. I thought it had great potential.
THAT SHIP HAS SAILED

Meaning: the opportunity has already passed; a missed opportunity.

Use In A Sentence: Do you think there is still a chance that you could work for Greg? No, I am afraid that ship has sailed.
BACKSEAT DRIVER

Meaning: a passenger who tries to tell the driver how to drive. It can also refer to someone who always likes to take control of a situation.

Use In A Sentence: Don’t be a backseat driver. I know how to drive.
COOL ONE'S JETS
Meaning: to calm oneself down.

Use In A Sentence: You need to take a moment and cool your jets. You aren’t thinking rationally right now.
FALL OFF THE WAGON

Meaning: to return to practicing a damaging behavior. Examples: drinking, overeating, drub abuse, being lazy, etc.

Use In A Sentence: Well it seems like Jerry has fallen off the wagon again. He doesn’t seem motivated to do anything.
A COUNTRY MILE
Meaning: a long distance.

Use In A Sentence: After the car ran out of gas, we had to walk a country mile to the nearest gas station.
A FORK IN THE ROAD

Meaning: to be at a point where a decision has to be made.

Use In A Sentence: I am at a fork in the road. I can continue my schooling or I can start my own business. What do you think I should do?
TO HIT A ROADBLOCK

Meaning: something has prevents you from making progress.

Use In A Sentence: Dave was making good progress on the project, but it seems like he has hit some kind of
TO HIT THE ROAD / TO HIT THE TRAIL

Meaning: to leave. To start your trip.

Use In A Sentence: Well, I guess we should hit the road if we want to get there before noon.
TO JUMP THE TRACK

Meaning: to suddenly change from one thought or activity to another.

Use In A Sentence: It just wasn’t working for us so we decided to jump the track and try something different.
TO PUT THE PEDAL TO THE METAL

Meaning: to drive as fast as you can.

Use In A Sentence: Put the pedal to the metal or else we are going to be late.
ROCKY ROAD

Meaning: a difficult period of time.

Use In A Sentence: Jack has been going down a rocky road ever since his move to LA.
SMOOTH SAILING

Meaning: to make progress easily with little to no difficulty.

Use In A Sentence: Initially, it was difficult to learn the new system. However, not it is nothing but smooth sailing for everyone.
SUNDAY DRIVER
Meaning: an extremely slow driver. Someone who is driving slow to enjoy the view.

Use In A Sentence: Sorry I am late. I got stuck behind some Sunday driver who didn’t want to let anyone pass.
THE JET SET

Meaning: a group of rich people who like to travel the world.

Use In A Sentence: His dream to join the jet-set came true after he was able to retire early.
A WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL

Meaning: used to describe a situation or problem that is extremely complicated.

Use In A Sentence: I can’t figure out this new computer system. It is really a wheel within a wheel. Can you help me?
TO THROW SOMEONE UNDER THE BUS

 Meaning: to avoid blame or trouble for something by allowing someone else to take responsibility.

Use In A Sentence: Mark always seems to throw me under the bus when something goes wrong
A TIGHT SHIP

Meaning: A very well organized group of people.

Use In A Sentence: I like working for Steve. He runs a tight ship.
TO MISS THE BUS

Meaning: to miss out on something. To fail to take advantage of an opportunity.

Use In A Sentence: You need to act fast or else you will miss the boat.
TO ROCK THE BOAT

Meaning: to do something that will cause problems for others

Use In A Sentence: I don’t want to be difficult and rock the boat, but I can’t come into work tomorrow.
TO PADDLE ONE'S OWN CANOE

Meaning: to be independent.

Use In A Sentence: Now that you are an adult, you are expected to paddle your own canoe. You can't rely on your parents to make every decision for you.
TO DRIVE SOMEONE UP A WALL
Meaning: to annoy or to irritate someone.

Use In A Sentence: I don’t know about you, but every time she talks about work it drives me up a wall.
HIT THE BEACH

Meaning: to go to the beach.

Use In A Sentence: Do you have any plans for this weekend? If the weather is nice I would like to hit the beach before it starts to cool off.
HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

Meaning: major and minor roadways.

Use In A Sentence: Mary spent the summer traveling all the highways and byways out West.
ON THE HOME STRETCH

Meaning: the last part of a long journey.

Use In A Sentence: We are on the home stretch. We have about 30 minutes before we get to our destination.
TO HAVE ITCHY FEET

Meaning: used to describe a person who has the desire to travel.

Use In A Sentence: Every time I go to the airport it gives me itchy feet to go somewhere new.
TO MAKE ONE'S WAY BACK TO SOMETHING

Meaning: to slowly work one’s way back to something.

Use In A Sentence: It was raining cats and dogs, but I slowly made my way back to the farm.
TO TAKE SOMEONE FOR A RIDE

Meaning: to deceive someone.

Use In A Sentence: I can’t believe I let Joe take me for a ride like that. I should have known he wasn’t telling me the truth.
Meaning: angry or violent behavior caused by stress from driving.

Use In A Sentence: A driver who hit two people in a road rage attack has been arrested.
TO GET THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

Meaning: to get things started. To start the journey. To begin to work.

Use In A Sentence: Well, I guess we better get the show on the road if we want to be there before noon.
TO SAIL CLOSE TO THE WIND

Meaning: to do something that is risky or dangerous.

Use In A Sentence: You are going to get yourself in trouble one day if you keep sailing close to the wind.
TO LIVE OUT OF A SUITCASE

Meaning: to briefly stay in several locations. Never staying in the same place long enough to unpack your bags.

Use In A Sentence: I am tired of living out of a suitcase. I miss...
TO HITCH YOUR WAGON TO A STAR

Meaning: to set high goals; to aim high.

Use In A Sentence: My parents always encouraged me to hitch my wagon to a star and aim high in life. That is the reason I am where I am today.
WHEELS FELL OFF

Meaning: slang for when an unexpected problem arises.

Use In A Sentence: Everything was going as planned until the wheels fell off and we had to abort the mission.
ROAD HOG
Meaning: a driver who takes up too much space making it difficult for others to pass.

Use In A Sentence: This guy is a road hog. I can’t pass him.
TO SEND FLYING

Meaning: to cause something to be scattered about.

Use In A Sentence: I quickly turned the corner and bumped into Mrs. Smith and sent all her books flying.
TO CROSS THE BRIDGE WHEN YOU GET TO IT

Meaning: to address the problem when/if it happens, not before.

Use In A Sentence: I am nervous that if Jack gets sick we will have to cancel our vacation. Well, we will cross that bridge when we get to it, but let’s not worry about it right now.
Meaning: to address the problem when/if it happens, not before.

Use In A Sentence: I am nervous that if Jack gets sick we will have to cancel our vacation. Well, we will cross that bridge when we get to it, but let’s not worry about it right now.
BUMP IN THE ROAD
Meaning: a problem that arises and slows down progress. Usually only temporary.

Use In A Sentence: We hit a bump in the road when the materials were delayed 4 days, but in the end, we finished the project on time.
TO BURN ONE'S BRIDGES

Meaning: to do something that can’t be undone. Usually, it refers to leaving a situation (like a job) in an unfavorable way that you are no longer welcome back or you can no longer return. Opposite of building bridges.

Use In A Sentence: Not only did he quit his job, but he started to work for our biggest competitor. He certainly burned his bridges. I hope it works out for him because he will never be able to work for us again.
TO GIVE THE GREEN LIGHT TO SOMEONE

Meaning: to give someone permission to do something.

Use In A Sentence: Tom gave me the green light to tell the staff about the company’s upcoming projects.
GO TO THE EXTRA MILE

Meaning: to do more than the necessary or to do more than expected to get something done.

Use In A Sentence: Joe went the extra mile to make everything was perfect so that his wife would enjoy the trip.
Meaning: To be in one’s comfort zone or to match their abilities.

Use In A Sentence: You need to get out of your wheelhouse and go meet new people.
LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Meaning: there is hope that a difficult situation is going to end very soon.

Use In A Sentence: Now that the government is going to sit down and talk about it, there is finally light at the end of the tunnel that this situation will get better.
TO LOWER THE BOOM

Meaning: to punish someone one. To put a stop to something someone is doing.

Use In A Sentence: Mrs. Johnson lowered the boom on Jimmy and Byron for misbehaving during class.
TO BE OFF ONE'S TROLLEY

Meaning: (slang) used to describe someone who is acting crazy or insane.

Use In A Sentence: You must be off your trolley if you think you can get all that work done before Monday.
ON THE FLY
Meaning: to do something quickly without much thought or planning in advance.

Use In A Sentence: George just got up there and gave a speech on the fly
TURN THE CORNER

Meaning: to begin to see improvement in a difficult situation.

Use In A Sentence: After two days in the hospital, the doctor said that Jane has finally turned a corner and is better.
TRAIN WRECK

Meaning: a major failure or complete disaster. It can also be used to describe a person whose life is in a complete mess.

Use In A Sentence: The trip to the West coasts turned out to be a train wreck. Nothing went as planned.
WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

Meaning: a crucial test. The point where one’s efforts are put to the test.

Use In A Sentence: This is where the rubber meets the road. Depending on how people react, we will know whether it was a good idea or not.
WALK THE PLANK

Meaning: used to describe the action of forcing someone to accept the consequences of something.

Use In A Sentence: Once we find the person who did this, they will most certainly have to walk the plank.
DON'T PUT THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE

Meaning: It is a nice way to tell someone to do things in the right order.

Use In A Sentence: Don’t put the cart before the horse. First, look for a job that you like. After you have a job then you can start thinking about how you plan on spending your money.
TO SPIN ONE'S WHEEL
Meaning: to waste one’s time on something without seeing much progress.

Use In A Sentence: Sam is just spinning his wheels. He isn’t getting anywhere in this job. He needs to look for something better.
TO TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

Meaning: to take a more ethical approach. An approach that is least likely to offend or upset others.

Use In A Sentence: Even though Megan treated Paul bad at work. Paul decided to take the high road and not return the same treatment to her.
**TO TAKE THE WIND OUT OF SOMEONE’S SAILS**

Meaning: to discourage someone.

Use In A Sentence: Brian was making great progress on the project until Mark came by and started to pick at the imperfections. He really took the wind out of Brian’s sails.
ON A WING AND A PRAYER

Meaning: there is very little chance of success.

Use In A Sentence: When we decided to quit our jobs and start this company we did it on a wing and a prayer.
PUDDLE JUMPER
Meaning: a small airplane that only travels short distances

Use In A Sentence: Once we arrive on the island, we are going to hop on a puddle jumper and it will take us the rest of the way.
FIFTH WHEEL OR THIRD WHEEL

Meaning: an unwanted extra person.

Use In A Sentence: Jim was the only person without a date. He felt like a 3rd wheel so he left early.
TO DESERT/LEAVE A SINKING SHIP

Meaning: to leave a situation in which one knows failure is imminent and it is better to leave before it is too late.

Use In A Sentence: I hate to be the one who deserts a sinking ship, but I need to think about my future.
ANY PORT IN A STORM

Meaning: when in a difficult situation any solution is a good solution even though one may not like it.

Use In A Sentence: Adam didn't want to move back in with his parents, but after quitting his job he can't afford a new place. Any port in a storm, I guess.
TO GET ONE'S WINGS

Meaning: to get a pilot's license.

Use In A Sentence: John was over the moon to finally get his wings.
IN FULL FLIGHT

Meaning: to flee as quickly as possible.

Use In A Sentence: The thieves left the scene in full flight, but eventually, the police caught them.
Meaning: to start an activity with a lot of energy and enthusiasm. To begin at full speed.

Use In A Sentence: Today is a new day. We need to forget about what happened yesterday and we need to hit the ground running.
TO HAVE YOUR FEET ON THE GROUND

Meaning: to remain calm in a difficult situation. To think practically in a stressful situation.

Use In A Sentence: When he lost his job Joe really showed that he had his feet on the ground by not panicking and making wise decisions.
ONE'S OLD STOMPING GROUNDS

Meaning: a favorite place where a person likes to go to often.

Use In A Sentence: After talking for a little bit, we all went back to our old stomping grounds, our favorite restaurant where we used to hang out every Friday.
PIT SHOP

Meaning: a short break during a road trip to get food, refuel or rest up a bit before continuing.

Use In A Sentence: Do you think we could take a pit stop? I really need to use the bathroom.
TO HITCH A RIDE

Meaning: to ask for a free ride. To go somewhere in somebody else’s car.

Use In A Sentence: Instead of taking the bus, I am just going to hitch a ride with Steve.
MAKE HEADWAY

Meaning: to make progress.

Use In A Sentence: After working hard for several months, we are finally making headway and it looks like it will be done before the deadline.
TO PART WAYS
Meaning: to go in different directions.

Use In A Sentence: After working together for 15 years we decided to part ways and start our own separate companies.
TO PULL UP STAKES

Meaning: to pack up and leave a campsite.

Use In A Sentence: It started to rain and it didn’t look like it was going to stop. So we decided to pull up stakes and start to move down the mountain.
TO SET UP CAMP
Meaning: to prepare an area to sleep outside.

Use In A Sentence: We need to set up camp before it gets dark.
TIRE KICKER

 Meaning: a person who appears to be interesting in buying something, but in the end, does not buy it. They tend to waste a lot of time.

 Use In A Sentence: I think he is just a tire kicker. He has no interest in buying that car...