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# Travel Basics: Things You Need To Know To Make Sure You Have the Best Trip Possible

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# **Travel Basics: Things You Need To Know To Make Sure You Have the Best Trip Possible**

Even though traveling can be an exciting time for anyone, it can also bring along a lot of headaches and hassles. There are long lines, inconsiderate people, and crying kids. This can cause anyone to have a stressful trip. There are however, some things that you can do to make your travels a little bit easier.

## **Travel Planning**

Making your own travel plans can be fun... yet at the same time confusing and frustrating. There is so much to do and you have to make sure that you are making the right decision for you and your family as well as getting the best value for your dollar. Here are a few things that you can do when travel planning to make your chore a little less unpleasant.

### **Save your money**

When you are planning a trip, if you start to save for it months in advance and put away a little bit each month, it makes the expense of the trip a little more affordable when the time comes to actually pay for everything. This is a great idea for family vacations. Everyone who wants to go can chip in a little at a time. This will get everyone involved in the preparations for the trip.

### **Decide where you will be going and how to get there**

The first thing that you need to do for your travel plans is decide where you are going. This will depend on why you are traveling. If you are planning a family vacation, then you may decide to go somewhere that the whole family will enjoy. This may be a fun spot like Disneyland or it may be a tropical getaway for two.

The next step is to figure out how you will be traveling. This could mean that you want to fly, or take a train, or maybe you are going to drive. Considering how many people are going and where you are going should make this. Make sure that you go with a choice that allows everyone to be comfortable and that it is a route that you can afford.

### **Deciding what to pack**

When you are thinking about what you are going to pack, there are some things that you should keep in mind. Think about where you are going first. Are you going somewhere that is warm and sunny or is the location cold and snowy. You want to make sure that you pack clothes that are suitable for the weather conditions.

Also think about how long you are going to be there. You will want to make sure that you pack enough clothes for everyday that you are there. Chances of you washing clothes while on vacation are probably pretty slim.

### **Make arrangements for home**

If you are planning to travel out of town for a certain amount of time, you may want to have someone check on your home and take care of a few things for you while you are away. If you have pets that you aren't boarding, you want to make sure that someone comes in and feeds them and checks in on them for you. You may need someone to water your flowers or even get your mail for you while you are away.

### **Checking Accessories that You Need in Traveling**

So, finally you have found the time for your well deserved break. You have already planned what to do on the big trip. Everything seems to be prepared. But what happens when you forget your favorite digi-cam and you only discovered it when you're already nearing the point of your destination?

Why does it happen that every time you go out of town, you always forget an item or accessory that you only remember after you left the house? If you are lucky, you only forget small things like a toothbrush, that you can easily pick up at the nearest store.

But what happens if you forget, for example, your digi-cam? Or how about your raincoat in a rainy season? How about the other essential travel supplies you need and might just as easily forget?

What are all the travel accessories you might need? Among the most obvious are:

- Suitcases
- Travel clothing
- Toiletries
- Travel appliances (electric razor, travel alarm, hairdryer)

These, however, are just the basic accessories. You will see that the more you travel, the more you need things other than suitcases, toiletries and appliances. For example, did you think that you should have brought a nice neck pillow on a long train ride or flight? Or, what if you get bruised on a hiking trip? Do you happen to have a first-aid kit close at hand?

Here are some accessories that you might want to bring when you take your next trip:

- Binoculars
- Music player
- Mini-flashlight

- Camera
- Clothing steamer
- Mini-umbrella
- Luggage rack
- Door alarm
- First-aid kit

You might want to add additional options to this list, or you might have a list entirely different from the one above. And when you check out stores and Internet sites that sell travel accessories, you would learn that there are many products out there that you thought you never needed but turned out to be highly necessary!

### **Travel Safety Tips: Things to Consider When Traveling**

Traveling is indeed, one of the most exhilarating activities you will ever experience. However, along with all of these great places you get to discover, come the risks of getting into trouble, especially if you are not familiar with your new surroundings. Here's is a list of some safety tips that you should heed next time you travel.

#### **1. Do your homework.**

It is always important to get to know the area you will be visiting; to familiarize yourself as much as possible with the laws, locations of best tourist spots, and the kind of people you will have to deal with.

Going to a place without having the slightest idea what it is all about is just as bad as going to the wilderness with beasts lurking everywhere and no way to protect yourself.

#### **2. Try not to travel alone.**

Of course, there are times when you just want to be alone and unwind; to shed off all of the hustle and bustle of urban living.

However, with imminent danger lurking everywhere, it is better to travel with someone if you can swing it. Having a traveling companion does add a big element of safety to every outing that you take.

#### **3. Planning.**

When traveling, it is extremely important to plan ahead. This will give you enough time to decide on which things need to be top priority and which can be left to a later time if need be.

Also, when you have enough time to plan things ahead, you will be able to think more clearly should a situation arise in which you need to rely on your wits to protect yourself.

#### **4. Always be prepared for emergencies.**

This does not necessarily mean that you must be pessimistic in planning for the worst. It just means that you have to consider any possible emergencies and be prepared for them. As they say, an ounce of prevention is always better than a pound of cure.

#### **5. Be aware of hotel accommodations.**

It is best to choose hotels that are equipped with the most innovative locks, alarms and safety equipment. This is to ensure you will be safe once you are alone in your room.

So, whether you are traveling for the first time or for the nth time, it is still best to keep in mind these safety traveling tips so that the experience will always be a positive one.

### **Travel Tips for Europe**

Europe is a wonderful place to visit. The beauty of the city and the excitement of the lights make it one of the best travel destinations in the world. If you have never been to Europe, there are some things that you should know before you are on your way.

#### **What to pack**

When packing for your trip to Europe, you should pack light. You can always buy what you need or forgot. You can find anything from clothes to toiletries. It is not big deal if you forget something.

If you are only going for a few days, you may want to try to fit everything you are taking into a carry on bag. By not checking in your luggage, you will avoid the long lines at the baggage claim and get out of the airport much quicker.

#### **Tips for safety while in Europe**

Remember that there are all kinds of people everywhere you go. Thieves look for visitors to foreign lands and they prey on them. Keep your money and credit cards in a money belt or a wallet hidden on you somewhere besides the normal spots like a pocket or purse. Rail passes are usually more expensive than individual train tickets, however they will save you time. Do not make international phone calls from your hotel room. There is usually an Internet café close at hand or you can purchase a phone card to communicate with your friends back home.

#### **How and When to tip**

It is hard to know how much to tip when you are in a strange place and you do not know what is expected. Customs are different in all countries. When you are in restaurants, make sure that you check your bill to see if you have a service charge included. If there is a service charge added to your bill, you will not have to add to it. If

there is no service fee, a general rule is to add 10 to 15 percent of the bill for the tip.

### **Get a reference book**

When going to a new country with different laws and rules than those to which you are accustomed, you may want to purchase a reference book to have handy. By having a book to look up what you need to know, you will feel more confident and secure on your vacation.

Using these few general rules and some common sense, you will have the perfect European vacation.

### **Tips for Choosing a Travel Agent**

There are many different logistics that go into planning a vacation. Airline tickets must be purchased, hotel reservations must be made, and an itinerary must be made. In truth, planning a vacation can be a lot of work for one person. That is why many people enlist the help of a travel agent to plan vacations for them.

Finding the right travel agent can be as important as finding the right hair dresser or the right mechanic. If you are thinking about hiring a travel agent to plan your vacation, look around before settling on one; find one who you know you can trust to plan the perfect vacation for you.

Using a travel agent can provide you with a number of benefits you would otherwise miss out on if you were to plan your vacation on your own. The experience of travel agents has allowed them to create good relationships with other companies involved in travel. They can get special deals on airline fares, hotel reservations, and any other tickets or reservations you might need to things such as theme parks or restaurants you plan to visit during your stay. This allows them to get better bargains for you in areas where you would be paying full price on your own. But overall, the mere convenience of having a travel agent plan your vacation can be entirely worth it.

The best way to find a good travel agent is to do your research. You can talk to friends and family members who have used travel agents in the past. You can also use the internet to try to find the best agency or agent in your area. In some cases you will be able to read testimonials from other customers who have used a certain agency. Try searching for message boards that might give you some insight to good travel agents in your area.

It is important to find a travel agent who understands your personal needs and desires when it comes to the type of vacation you are looking for. You should find a travel agent who is willing to get to know you, your likes and dislikes, so they can build a relationship with you and be able to better plan this vacation and vacations in the future.

It is also a good idea to find a travel agency that is part of the American Society of Travel Agents. Members of the society include travel agents, cruise lines, airlines, hotels, and a number of other travel-related institutions. Membership in the American Society of Travel Agents allows travel agents to work with other members to get the best deals and rates for you. Membership also requires certain qualifications so by finding a travel agency that is part of the Society ensures that you will be getting excellent service.

Of course, it is perfectly acceptable to ask questions in order to determine if a travel agent is right for you. Questions such as, 'How long have you been in the travel business?', can be helpful in giving you a better idea of your travel agent's background. Some potential customers have even been known to ask potential travel agents for references. By doing this, you are able to speak with customers who have used this specific travel agent and ask them about their experiences. This should give you the clearest idea of whether or not the travel agent will work well with you.

Once you find a travel agent who you believe will put together the best vacation package possible for you and your family, it is important that you work with him or her. Keep in mind that although the travel agent will be doing the majority of the travel planning for you, it will still be important for you to take time to meet with the travel agent, go over your expectations for the trip, and the options the travel agent will go over with you.

Your travel agent is unlikely to make any final decisions before consulting with you first. It is your vacation and therefore you should have the final say on everything planned. This is why it is important that you make yourself accessible to your travel agent. By working together with a good travel agent, your vacation is likely to be a great success.

### **Travel Reservation Tips for a Hassle Free Trip**

Start with the basics. Anyone who wants to enjoy a hassle-free trip has to start with the basic concern of any traveler - how to handle travel reservations. Here are a number of tips that may help:

**Decide on a travel plan** - specific destination, how many days, what activities, etc. The attention given to this first step will ensure smooth sailing in making the travel arrangements.

- If the destination is a foreign country, make sure all information that would be needed in making reservations are on hand.

### **Airline Reservations**

- If booking on online, use a reservation site where ticket prices for all airlines are shown so a comparison can be readily seen. If booking for more than one

person, check also the ticket price for both a single passenger and multiple passengers. Some airlines quote different prices.

- If notification of your reservation is done by e-mail, make sure that the ticket price quoted is the same. Sometimes, some airlines claim the airfare booked earlier is no longer available.

## **Hotel Reservations**

- Ask if the rate is a flat rate or per person. Ask how many beds are in the room and what the size is. Make sure to finalize a rate before getting off the phone.
- Ask about tax rates that would be added.
- Will breakfast be included with the price of the room? What time is it served and what is included.
- Are there guarantee and cancellation policies? Most hotels require guarantee for reservation with a credit card. Will they ask a check deposit?
- If this is a standard reservation, make sure there is a confirmation number.

## **Tips for Making Vacation Reservations Online**

What makes planning a vacation easier than being able to book everything from plane flights to restaurant reservations, all from the comfort of your own home? Hotel reservations, flights, and car rentals can all be booked online. The convenience of using the internet to make online reservations has made the world of travel plans ten times easier than before.

Before booking your vacation, make sure to do your research. If you are smart you will want to get yourself the best deals possible. In order to do this you will have to research and compare prices from airlines, hotels, rental car companies and other businesses online. The internet makes this easily done with just a few clicks of the mouse. When you set up your account with whatever company you are making your travel plans with, you will likely need a username and password.

Make sure you select a username that you will be able to remember and a password that is both unique but easy to remember for you. It is important that others are not able to guess your password, in order to keep your credit card information secure.

If you are planning on taking future trips it might be a good idea to store your password with the website you are using. That way you can come back to the website and have all your credit card information ready for you when you are ready to plan other vacations. This makes the vacation planning process even easier.

Make sure you read the fine print on any travel websites. On some websites that sell airline tickets, prices can be deceiving because tickets are typically advertised at the prices prior to tax being applied. Since tax on airline tickets usually raises the price somewhat significantly, it is important to take note of the fact that the price you see first

may not be the price you pay in the end.

Hotels and sometimes airlines often offer discount rates for early online reservations. It is important for you to look into these possible discounts and take advantage of them if they are available. Some hotels might offer more of a discount than others, which is something to take into consideration if you are booking online and looking to save money. If you do decide to make your reservations online, be sure to make them early. Some hotels and airlines have a cut off date after which online reservations cannot be made. For example, some travel companies like airlines and hotels do not accept online reservations made less than two or three days before the date the reservations are being made for.

To avoid any online scams make sure that the website you are using is reputable and legitimate. Do not use a website you have never heard of before, stick to the more popular travel sites such as Expedia.com which books flights, hotel reservations and car rental. Perhaps talk to friend, family or other people you know and trust who you know have booked vacations online in the past. Ask them what website they used to book their trip and find out whether or not they were satisfied.

Perhaps the most important thing to do when making reservations online is to print out everything. The website will provide you with a web receipt or email receipt following your purchase. It is important to keep a copy of these receipts in case there are any problems with the reservations once you get to the airport or hotel.

Make sure you receive some kind of email confirmation after your order. Almost all websites that sell products, including airline tickets and hotel reservations, send email confirmation to customers after they make their purchase. If you do not receive an email, something may be wrong and you might want to check into it.

If booking online makes you a little uneasy then it might be a good idea to call and confirm your reservations either a few days after you have made them or a few days prior to your trip. Providing a phone operator with the confirmation number given to you upon purchase and possibly a little more information, the operator will be able to confirm your reservations.

### **Choosing the Best Travel Accommodation**

There are many things to consider when choosing your travel accommodations. The decision could make your trip fun or a disappointment. Choosing the right hotel is a must. Most travelers spend more time in airline ticket reservations and bargains but less time in choosing the right accommodations. Thus they may end up on the wrong side of the bed during their stay.

To get the most out of your hotel accommodations, remember to book as early as possible and make your dates more flexible. Hotels that specialize in catering to business people consider weekends as off season. Family vacationers can tap into

special packages during weekends. Primarily, you should choose your hotel based on name, amenities, features, price, packages and location.

Here are some considerations in choosing your best travel accommodations:

1. Accommodations should be family-friendly. Always ask if your hotel offers children activity areas with educational and fun activities supervised by duly-trained care-givers.
2. Your hotel should provide a swimming pool for children, daycare service, crib rental and child-proof electrical outlets.
3. Stay in a hotel that has electronic room-key cards and has a security viewer installed on their doors.
4. Make it a priority to choose a room on the upper floor.
5. If you're the one who likes to spend more time in your hotel room and the balcony, you should ask for the available amenities and the conditions of the surrounding environment.
6. Depending on whether you're on a private or business trip, ask your hotel about the availability of laundry service, hair dryers, coffee makers, newspapers, free meals, fax machine, bar, cable television, parking, shuttle service, internet connection, etc.
7. The hotel property layout and its location may speak more of its surrounding environment. Noisy locations such as construction on adjacent property, car traffic and noisy waterfalls are not specified on hotel flyers. So be sure to ask about it.
8. Beautifully landscaped surroundings with trees, flowers and inner courts also enhance your travel pleasure. Moreover, gift shops and restaurants all add up to a wonderful travel experience.
9. The location of your hotel with respect to main attraction is equally important. It could save you money on taxi and bus fare.
10. Make sure that the room service is provided 24 hours a day.
11. Check out the room itself. Is it brightly colored or classical? It sets the mood of your travel.

In order to get the most out of your travel, whether for business or family vacations, be sure to know everything about the hotel you are planning to check in to. Ask friends and relatives who have been there. Don't just depend on the hotel's webpage which is undoubtedly biased. Having to stay in a hotel which you don't like could ruin your trip.

### **Hotel Ratings and What They Mean**

When you are choosing a hotel for your travel plans, you will usually see that there are stars beside the hotel name. There are usually four or three or even five stars. These stars represent the rating that the hotel has been awarded. You should know what these ratings mean and this will help you in finding the best possible choice of hotel for you and your family while on vacation.

### **Choosing a hotel**

Some people choose their hotel simply on the star rating that they receive. There are many reasons for the stars. There are people who are paid to check out these hotels and see what their weaknesses and their strengths are. The lodging, the comfort, the employees, service, food and even the way that the shower and toilet run will make a difference in how the hotel is rated determine these. When considering a hotel, you should shop around and make a careful decision since this is where you will be spending a good portion of your time.

### **Where to find information**

There are many places that help in the decision to locate a good hotel. There are many sites offered online that have all the ratings of the hotels in your particular area. You can read up on just about anything you want to know about online. If you are member to AAA, they also have services that will help you to locate great hotels with only the best service.

### **Do your homework**

One thing to remember is compare prices and hotels. This is certainly true if you are reserving your hotel online. Read all the fine print and always print a copy of your reservation. This is your receipt just in case something would get mixed up or lost.

### **Opinions**

Read all the consumer opinions on the hotels. Customer opinions are the best way to choose a hotel. They will let you know if there is a problem with a certain hotel and why you should or should not choose that particular hotel. You can rely on what people think to form your own idea of the perfect hotel for you and your traveling plans.

### **Get the most for your money**

When you are looking for a hotel to stay at on your vacation, investigate the different hotels before you settle in on one. Make sure that the rooms are what they say they are and have reliable and sufficient service. You want to make sure that you get what you pay for and nothing less.

### **Pet Friendly Hotels**

There are lots of people who want to include their pets in on their vacation. Many people feel as if their pets are part of their family and cannot leave home without them. One thing that you need to consider when traveling is getting a hotel that accepts your pet. You do not want to leave your pet out in the cold when it comes to a place for you to stay. There are some tips you can use when you bring your pet on vacation with you.

### **Calling ahead of time**

If you think that you have found the perfect pet friendly hotel, make sure that you call the hotel and double check on their pet policy. Make sure that you are aware of any additional costs or deposits that may be included when you check in. Make sure that there are not weight limits for your pets.

### **Bring some of the animal's things**

When you are traveling with your pet, bring some of their belongings just like you would your own. Pack some of their favorite toys and foods. It is also a good idea to bring all the medications or vitamins that the animals may need or require. Make sure that you also have the numbers of your pets vet on hand just in case there is an emergency with your pet.

### **Portable kennels**

You may want to think about investing in a portable kennel. This may make a more comfortable and secure place for your animal and lessen the amount of mischief your pet can get into. This will also be help when you want to go out of the room alone without your pet. This will keep your pet in a safe place and out of trouble.

### **Do some research**

You can always find out some of the attractions and places that also welcome your pets when you are in an unfamiliar area. If you check online, you may be able to find out these items quicker and get some valuable information and tips when traveling with your animal. It is better to know the pet friendly areas before you travel out of town with your pet.

### **Tag your pet**

Whenever you are traveling with your pet, you must make sure that the dog is wearing some form of ID. Make sure that you have the dogs name and a contact number for you if the dog is lost. Also never leave your pet unattended. Never let your pet out of your sight. You never know what could happen. Someone could take your animal or worse your pet could get into a lot of trouble.

## **Tips on How to Enjoy Traveling Alone**

Want to go to a new exciting place, but don't have anyone to tag along? There may be times when you have to travel alone in a foreign land. Whether just for fun or on official business, you have to take safety measures. Traveling alone need not be lonely. It could be fun in more ways than one. Don't be reluctant to travel just because you're on your own. Just remember these things:

### **Plan ahead**

Research and read about the place you're heading to. Know where's the nearest hotel, restaurant, and such. Make reservations too, if possible. That way, your travel is on a good start.

### **Take a city map**

You better study how to read maps. Needless to say, these can guide you where you are going, especially if it's the first time you're going to that place. Relying too much on the cab driver is not a good idea.

### **Learn the language**

Just study the basics, and the most common things you're likely to ask a local. Learn it before you arrive.

### **Hide your valuables**

Put your guard up. Don't invite muggers to come and get you. Don't wear too much jewelry outside the streets. Use inexpensive accessories.

### **Dress appropriately**

Check what the locals wear on a given time of day. You don't want your clothes screaming you're a tourist. The lesser attention you draw to yourself, the better.

### **Don't be afraid to ask for directions**

It would be okay to ask someone for directions, but be sure you are going to choose who to ask. You can ask a waiter in restaurant, or the receptionist in your hotel. Just be sure you get all information. Asking from a complete stranger outside is not advisable.

### **Bring some cash**

Take just enough. Traveler's checks and credit cards are good, and it could be your primary mode of payment, but you might want to keep a few extra dollars in your pocket with local money.

### **Enjoy your self**

Well, you are traveling, so make the most of it. Make friends with a local. Talk to somebody over lunch in a café. Get the addresses of the friends you make to send them a thank you card. Maybe next time, you'd be their host.

Traveling alone can be your best experience. With solo traveling, you will definitely learn more about your self and what you can do. Try it. It would be fun!

## **Tips for the Right Holiday Travel Package**

It is not usually wise to be traveling during holidays, as these are the times when almost every other person in the world is traveling. But if you are going to join the crowd, it is best to plan ahead, book ahead and go to your destination early to avoid all the hassle. It's also best, if you are thinking of picking up a holiday package, to bear the following tips in mind.

- No two people are alike, keep this in mind because the agencies that create holiday packages know this and, although they have created ready-made packages, nothing about them is etched in stone. Use this fact to haggle your way into cheaper or better deals or to ask for extra perks, especially if you're thinking of staying for more than a week in a particular place.
  
- Be careful of travel agents. Travel agents may give you the best deal for your package, which normally includes airfare, lodgings and transportation. But a really good agent can be flexible as well. One example would be if you want a rental car for the first half of your trip, but you want to get rid of it by the second half. A good agent can arrange this for you, sometimes for a cheaper price.
  
- Be sure that the package you want is available. You don't want to get excited about something that ends up being sold out. Some agents give out too-good-to-be-true packages, which end up being "sold out" in the end. So before you make a deal or transfer a morsel of cash, make sure that the trip you want is still available.
  
- Be sure to know exactly what airline and route you're taking. You won't want those unpleasant layovers that can be a real pain, not to mention delay your schedule.
  
- A sign of a good package is one that is very flexible. As we said before, no two people are alike, and a good package should reflect that. It should allow you to choose between destinations, as well as brands and lodgings without altering the price. A choice of which rental car to take is also a sign of a good, flexible package.
  
- Finally, it's good to ask for discounts that you might get if you do certain things, like stay in the hotel for more than a week, or sign up on the internet instead of by phone. Research first before you cough up the money for down-payment; make sure you've exhausted all possible ways for generating discounts before you decide on a package.

## **Essential Airway Travel Tips**

Lets face it, taking an airplane is the fastest way to get to any destination that is too far to drive. There are some people who love to fly and then there are some that absolutely hate to fly and would do anything to get out of it. There are some strategies that you can do to make your air traveling a more pleasant and smarter way to travel.

### **Give yourself plenty of time**

The lines at the airport and bus or train station can cause anyone to have a nervous breakdown. The best advice for the long line situation when you are traveling is to arrive early. No matter what type of travel you are taking, make sure that you give yourself plenty of time to arrive, check your bags, and get yourself checked in. It is best to arrive at least two hours in advance before you are scheduled to leave. This may seem like a hassle now, but it will save you time and aggravation later.

### **Do not carry any foreign object**

Make sure that you do not have anything packed that could cause a delay when you are checking your bags. This means do not carry things like guns, knives, any kind of weapon, of course, dangerous materials or anything that may cause a stir at the check in. This will not only slow up your check in, but it will also bring attention to you and stir up an unnecessary reaction by the staff.

### **Carry on items**

If you are traveling with some carry on luggage, and you know that you going to be on a popular flight, then it would be a good idea to get a seat towards the back of the plane. This will make it possible for you to be the first to get on the plane. This way you do not have to check some of bags due to lack of space for your items.

### **Bring some goodies with you**

When you are traveling, make sure that you bring some snacks with you. It does not matter if you a traveling by bus, plane, or train, make sure that you have some type of food and drink for when you get hungry or thirsty. This will lessen the chance of you getting sick or feeling weak during the ride. If you do not bring your own items, you may have to purchase them. Some transportation companies do not serve complimentary snacks or drinks.

### **Bring some form of entertainment**

If you are traveling long distances, bring some type of entertainment for you and other members of your family. Bring a book, magazine, crossword puzzle or computer games. This will make the time go faster and occupy your mind when traveling.

## **Amtrak: A New Adventure**

One of the emerging methods of travel in the United States in recent years has been around for over a century – the railroad. Amtrak, the leading railroad for personal travel, has made great strides in providing fast and convenient travel for millions of customers each year. With over thirty routes throughout the United States and Canada, why not travel by train to your next vacation destination. Traveling on an Amtrak train line can provide you and your family with a ride to remember. The great service and excellent accommodations provide a wonderful start to your vacation.

During your trip by train, you will likely find that traveling by train is far easier than traveling by car or plane. Although train rides may take longer than flying in an airplane, you also get to take in sights along the way. For people who are afraid of flying, trains provide the perfect option.

Amtrak trains also offers something airplanes do not – private rooms for long trips. On most Amtrak trips that span through the night, trains are used that feature private suites for those who choose to purchase them. Inside you will find a bed and accommodations that will remind you more of a hotel room than a train. Suites can be purchased to sleep up to four adults, a great convenience for those who find it hard to fall asleep sitting up.

Given the fact that trains are much larger than airplanes, you are typically allowed to bring more luggage with you on a train than you are on an airplane. Amtrak's baggage guidelines allow passengers to carry on two bags and check up to three pieces of baggage. Most Amtrak lines will also allow you to bring bicycles on board. As is standard with airplane travel, baggage exceeding fifty pounds is not permitted onboard and all baggage must pass through security checks before being placed on board the train. There are also a number of prohibited items, including firearms, explosives, weapons, flammable material, and corrosive chemicals. Security at train stations is often just as tight as it is at airports, so have no fears over your safety aboard the train. Given that the train is limited to staying on its tracks, there is little chance of high jacking.

Like airplanes, Amtrak trains offer both coach and business class seating. On some Amtrak train lines, including Acela Express and Metroliner, business class is the lowest option for seating. These lines offer first class seating as well which is considered a step above business class. If you are looking to save money, try not to book your train tickets on these lines.

If you are traveling with young children a train may be the perfect choice of travel. Although the trip will be longer than flying on a plane, the train offers the child many more features to keep them occupied. Many train lines travel through a number of major cities en route to their destination. In doing this passengers are given full views of surrounding areas and any sights that may be in close distance to the train. This can be exciting for young children to see. The train also offers a dining car that passengers are able to walk to during its hours of operation. Set up like a restaurant, the dining car offers everything from meals to simple snacks like a bag of chips. Taking a walk to the dining car for a snack can be the perfect time filler for a young child.

If you travel on a train and decide that it is the best method of travel for you, you have

the option of enrolling in the Amtrak Rewards program. Through the program frequent Amtrak travelers are able to earn reward points for miles they travel on Amtrak. Like frequent flier programs, the Amtrak Rewards program rewards frequent passengers with points that can be redeemed for tickets, gift certificates, merchandise, and, given partnerships, even airline miles.

When planning your next trip why not try a ride on the train? It can be a great experience and a fun trip for you and your family. You will most likely find that a trip on Amtrak is well worth your money.

### **Passport Please: Tips for International Travel**

Traveling to a foreign country can be a new and exciting experience if you have never traveled abroad. There are plenty of new sights to see and things to try, but there are also dangers that naïve travelers must be aware of. When traveling internationally there are a number of things to take into consideration that will make your vacation even more enjoyable.

When traveling internationally it might be a good idea to invest in travel insurance. Not only does travel insurance protect you from any flight cancellations, which can be important since flights abroad can be more costly than domestic rates, but travel insurance can come in handy in other ways as well.

Before leaving check into your medical insurance plan to find out if you are covered in foreign countries. Some insurance plans do not cover medical expenses in foreign countries and in some cases insurance plans are not accepted by foreign hospitals. In case of medical emergency while you are away, travel insurance policies can be purchased to cover any unforeseen medical costs that may occur while you are traveling.

Make sure you get to the airport early. In today's world, there are a number of security precautions and safety measures that are taken before you are allowed to board the plane. This means that you will need plenty of time to check your bags and get through security before your flight leaves. Even if you end up having a little extra time most airports have lounges where travelers can wait for flights. It is better to have a little extra time than to miss your flight. Also, be sure to have your boarding pass and passport handy so you can get them checked quickly and easily rather than having to search through your bags for them.

If you are travelers abroad for the first time, beware of scams that many international travelers unfortunately fall prey to. There are a number of smalltime thieves that lurk in airports waiting to make unsuspecting passengers their next victims. Make sure to keep your bags in sight at all times, to avoid getting anything stolen. Also, be sure to only keep items you will really need in your wallet during your trip. Try not to carry a lot of

unnecessary items with you. It is also a good idea to lock all baggage that you bring with you.

It is a smart idea to make copies of all important documents before your trip. You should make photocopies of your passport, credit cards, medical prescriptions, and your medical insurance information. Photocopying your credit cards will allow you to have images of them if they happen to be lost or stolen during your trip. You will have the numbers, expiration dates and the phone number to call if you do misplace them.

By copying medical prescriptions you are able to have the information for any medications you might need during your trip. Medication bottles are small and can easily be misplaced. It is important to always have your medical insurance information with you in case of any medical emergencies. Of course, as previously mentioned, you should make sure that your medical insurance fully covers any medical expenses in other countries before departing on your trip. If it does not cover you, travel insurance might be a smart choice for you.

Make sure you know the currency conversions between American dollars and the currency of the country you are visiting. Make sure you are visiting places that will accept your credit cards or make sure that you have enough local currency on you for any expenses. You will also want to look into places to exchange your currency. Different places offer different rates of conversion. Banks are typically the best bet, as they usually offer the best rates. However, it is smart to look into this and do some research before your trip. Another option is traveler's checks, which can be purchased from your local bank prior to your trip, and can be used anywhere.

The most important tip for people planning to travel abroad is to have fun and enjoy the trip. For most people it is not everyday that they get to visit a foreign country, so try your best to take in as many sights as possible and don't forget your camera.

### **Keeping Your Valuables Safe While Traveling**

An essential item for anyone traveling abroad is the passport. This, aside from cash, credit cards and the tickets must be nearby at all times, preferably in a small handbag or purse for easy accessibility. If it is possible, you might want to memorize your passport number just in case – heaven forbid - it gets lost.

There is a high probability that when you travel, you usually use the same bag for various trips. It is best to remove all the old destination tags and just have the new destination tag attached to avoid confusion. Also, for personal protection, you should have a lock and key for your bag and have it labeled both inside and outside to avoid having another traveler mistake your luggage for his or her own.

Depending on the length of your trip, you should just bring just enough luggage that you can carry. If the trip will take a few days or longer, choose bags that you can

comfortably walk around with. You don't want to be stuck waiting helplessly for a taxi or bus or put in the position of asking strangers to help you lug your luggage. Above all, you should never let a stranger look after the luggage because it is possible that they will put something in it or even steal it.

During the trip, you should choose a hotel located on a well-traveled street. Generally, the more expensive the hotel, the better the security. The first thing to do when entering a hotel room is to check the windows, sliding doors and connecting rooms if there are any and make sure it is secure. Most hotels have a small vault in the room and safety deposit box, which is complimentary.

When leaving the hotel, it is also advisable to leave the room key in the lobby and just claim it when entering the hotel room. Do not answer the hotel room door before verifying who it is. If someone claims to be a hotel employee and you do not recall making any request for room service, it is best to call the front desk first to verify.

Most importantly, make sure your hotel room door is locked at all times.

### **Travel Insurance: Necessity or Not?**

You are planning on booking a vacation and you are not sure if you need travel insurance. You have heard the warnings and you know that many travel agents suggest travel insurance as a necessity for any vacation. Since you are planning on spending a lot of money between air fares, hotel reservations, and other arrangements, you feel like it might be a good idea to insure your trip – but is it really necessary?

There are a number of unexpected circumstances that could arise prior to your trip that would make travel insurance vital to you getting your money back. Travel insurance was created to act as a saving grace to people whose trips become cancelled due to these circumstances. Whether the airline unexpectedly goes out of business a week before your trip or you become ill and are unable to travel, travel insurance ensures that your money will be refunded if the travel plans are not carried out as planned. There are a number of areas where travel insurance can help you out while on vacation.

If you are traveling abroad you might want to look into your regular insurance plan to make sure it would cover you in a foreign country. Some insurance plans will not cover medical expenses in other countries or are not accepted in other countries. If this is true of your insurance then any medical expenses or emergencies that may arise while you are away will not be covered. By purchasing travel insurance, you are guaranteed to be covered in any medical situation that may arise.

Since September 11th, break outs of terrorism have plagued not only the United States, but the globe. If a terrorist act suddenly breaks out in an area that you have booked a flight to, the airline is not required to provide you with a refund if you choose not to travel to the area because of terrorism – that is, unless you have travel insurance. Given the unpredictability of these events in today's world, you never know where or when a

troubling situation may arise.

Flights can be cancelled at any time for a number of reasons, closing of the airline, inclement weather conditions, and a number of other factors that can not be controlled. In some circumstances flights are not rescheduled and refunds are not given, which means you not only lose your flight but also the amount of money you spent to purchase the ticket. Travel insurance insures your ticket so that no matter what the reason is, for the flight not taking off, you receive your money back.

Have you ever lost your luggage? In many cases airlines find and return the missing baggage but in some cases the luggage is never found. In some other cases, it is discovered that items have been taken from luggage. In this case, travel insurance acts to insure whatever items are lost or stolen so you are able to replace your belongings. Perhaps one of the most appealing aspects of travel insurance is that it protects you from any unforeseen circumstances in your life that may prohibit you from flying. If, for any reason from sickness to a death in the family, you are unable to travel as scheduled, your money will be refunded.

If you do decide to purchase a travel insurance plan, it is important that you research a number of travel insurance companies and plans before deciding on one. Travel insurance is not only a good idea for people traveling by plane, but also on cruise lines. Be sure that the company and plan you choose is the one that best suits you and the travel plans you have made. If you travel frequently, you may want to consider a long term travel insurance policy. Year long insurance policies are available from a number of travel insurance. This provides frequent travelers with constant coverage, rather than having to purchase travel insurance every time they travel. Make sure to cover all the bases and ask plenty of questions when purchasing your travel insurance. Make sure you know that your policy will cover all unforeseen circumstances and you do not end up with a plan that only covers some situations.

### **Tips on Travel Policies**

Getting travel insurance before traveling is a smart idea. All-inclusive travel policies cover trip cancellation and even medical and theft circumstances. Check out the following tips to land you on a better bargain.

Some credit card companies have their own policies regarding travel insurances if you use the card to purchase the ticket. So better check on it first.

There are airline and cruise line companies that offer travel insurance policies. However, they may go bankrupt and the insurance might lose its value. It's better if you buy a policy from an insurance company.

There are different policies attached to certain travel insurance. Some companies even offer different types of travel polices. Be sure to get a good grasp on the contents of the policy before actually buying it.

Be sure that the medical coverage of the travel insurance is well stipulated in the policy. Be sure to understand them well so that you know what are included. If you are getting a policy for the entire family, see to it that all the members are included. This is because some insurance policies limit to a number of persons only.

Know how much the company is paying for in case something happens. For example in case of theft, how much would they be paying for the lost items. Will the company be paying in full for the lost items? Also be sure that the valuable things that you will be bringing with you on the trip are covered. And in case the trip is called off or cut short, will the company be giving you a full refund?

Make sure you know the term that goes with it. In case of a medical emergency while traveling, will you have to pay for the medical bills yourself and get a reimbursement afterwards or will the insurance policy take care of them immediately?

There is more than one way of getting travel insurance. Check out the internet. This way you get to look around and get a better deal. You never even have to leave the comfort of your own home or take a time off from work.

Most travel insurance policies include trip cancellation insurance and medical insurance that ranges between five and seven percent of the price of your trip. The price of such is based on the age of the traveler and the cost of the trip while traveling.

### **Cold Hard Cash: A Guide to Currency Conversion**

Have you ever exchanged your money in a foreign country and gotten much more or much less money than you had before? Exchange rates can fluctuate depending on the travelers who convert their currency into another form. Every time you exchange currency, you are contributing to the strength of both currencies. The Foreign Exchange Market (Forex) has learned from the strengths and the weaknesses of the world's floating economy and therefore has started a business of exchanging massive amounts of money into foreign currencies, operating solely on supply and demand.

The world currencies started to measure their economies in accordance to supply and demand, rousing unlimited profit possibilities if handled properly. This is when the buying and selling of currency started. Forex came into being, allowing people to buy and sell ample amounts of foreign currencies, almost like a stock market.

Forex became available for all to use in 1995, for any one person or corporation who wished to gamble a few dollars in search of profit. Every day, over two trillion dollars exchanged hands through buying and selling through Forex. Buying and selling occurs in pairs, when an investor buys in one currency while simultaneously selling in another. As an example, an investor might decide to buy American dollars while selling the British Pound.

It's as simple as exchanging your currency into another lower currency and exchanging it back when the lowermost currency improves. Just by interchanging your currency, you are helping to strengthen that particular currency. This market is affected by all of the investors doing the same thing you are, therefore you can see the need to understand the trends in the market are important. You must learn the art of anticipating market trends by learning the two basic strategies: Technical and Fundamental.

Technical Strategy is the act of anticipating market trends by analyzing the currencies preceding growth, volume and exchange rates and comparing them to the current currency trade rates. You will then utilize this information to make an informed decision on future trading of the currency.

Fundamental Strategy is the act of anticipating market trends by comparing its ethical, political, and monetary policies and comparing them to the current currency exchange rate. Political instability and protective monetary practices can have a crucial impact on how a country's currency will be considered by Forex investors.

Another valuable tool traders can use as a source of incredible profits is leverage. Leverage is a way for traders to move large sums of currency without actually touching the money. Employing leverage would allow a trader with access to a myriad amount of cash to be able to trade in larger numbers of currency than normally. This can add up to millions of dollars very quickly and therefore should only be used by experienced traders. There is never a guarantee that a trader will profit, the potential for loss and gain weigh evenly.

Forex is an exciting market to explore, if you have the money it takes to start trading without going broke and taking the time to study and understand all prospects. Anyone with an internet connection can be a potential trader.

It is suggested not to attempt any trade without receiving the education and training you need to become a successful trader. Forex offers a free introduction and tutorial to get started in currency conversion, along with a free demo account and lessons with all the tools and utilities you will need to get started. Once you complete the free trials and decided that currency conversion is right for you, you can register yourself with Forex and take the plunge. Invest in as much or as little as you choose. You will have all the resources you need to begin trading currencies on hand 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with live help when you need it.

As the business of currency conversion grows, and becomes more widely known, it will undoubtedly be picked up by other companies who wish to make profits and start their own business of currency conversion. So, take advantage of the free offers Forex has to offer and take a plunge into the wonderful world of foreign currency conversion and see how well you profit.

## **Whadya Bring Me? Souvenirs that Everyone Will Love**

Everyone loves a souvenir gift upon returning from vacation. Actually most people expect them, whether they say so or not. Souvenirs make a nice little thank you gift to the neighbors who watched your home while you were gone, the babysitter who regularly watches your children, the pet sitter or anyone else you hold near and dear. Souvenirs are also nice for "just because" gifts. Never forget to buy plenty memorabilia for yourself as well.

If you drive yourself or your family to your vacation destination, it's nice to stop in each state you cross through and pick up a little something with that particular state's namesake. Normally you can find an impressive selection of souvenirs near the borders of the states, at an Oasis, truck stops, or individual souvenir stores. Most of these stores have at least one clearance table where you can find some really great deals that everyone will love.

The most popular souvenirs are refrigerator magnets in the shape of the state or depicting the states persona. Coming in second would be shot glasses and ashtrays, whether you're a drinker, a smoker or not, these make cute little knickknacks. Key chains, stickers and miscellaneous art depicting the state symbol, bird or flower make nice gifts for kids or as back-ups in case you accidentally forget someone.

Miniature spoons, bells, and tea sets are a great gift and look nice on a display rack, often sold with a wide selection of state spoons. And who can walk away without buying at least one t-shirt or hat with the states name or logo on it?

Theme parks like Disney, Universal Orlando, Sea World, Great America, Indiana Beach and the like, normally have masses of retail stores with clothes, toys, hats and knickknacks that can only be purchased from them. Many also have outlets where you can buy personalized gifts, like a necklace with a persons name written on a single grain of rice (which is available at most theme parks,) or an air brushed T-shirt, personalized in any way as you wish.

Most theme parks have a souvenir photo shop where you can dress in a variety of costumes and pose for a photo in an old time western background. These professionals photographers do an excellent job in making your picture look as realistic and old fashioned as possible. You can pose as a cowboy or a bandit, a saloon gal or a proper lady and be pictured in an old time MOST WANTED poster. There are a variety of costumes, backgrounds, and posters available offering a choice of photo packages to choose from. These make great souvenirs or as personal gifts.

Medieval Times has a great selection of souvenirs that would appeal to all ages. From costumes, to costume jewelry to real swords and daggers, you'll find these all at Medieval Times. There are a number of packages you can buy to become knighted, where you will have a public ceremony with the King and Princess and have your picture taken with them. After the ceremony you will receive a certificate of your knighthood and a real sword to take home with you.

New York is popular for its "I love NY" logos. New York is a very proud state and you can find their name on almost anything, from T-shirts to pencils. The souvenir selection in New York is endless.

It's always nice to pick up a post card and mail it to a friend or family member. Many of these post cards have pictures of your vacation area that would add a nice touch, showing your friend or family member that you are thinking about them.

When ever selecting a souvenir for a family member or friend, keep in mind what would be a thoughtful gift for this person? For a child or an adult with an affinity for teddy bears, find a cute plush bear with the theme park or state logo. For the knickknack collector, shot glasses, bells, miniature tea sets or spoons would be a nice addition to their collection. Older children or teenagers would most likely enjoy a T-shirt or some other thoughtful gift. Wherever you go, make sure that your souvenirs include the state's name or logo, or if you go to a resort or theme park, make sure the gift bears its name.

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