

Timely Travel Tips by Jenny Reed

YOU'VE BEEN PLANNING THE FAMILY VACATION FOR MONTHS and feel you have finalized the travel details. To ensure peace of mind while you are away, why not run over this checklist of travel and packing tips you might not have known before you go? When planning a trip, the only worries you should have are what to pack!

1. Passport laws are changing. Air travel outside of the U.S. now requires a passport. Cruise travel will require a passport or the new passport card starting this summer. For up-to-date information regarding the new policies, please visit the Department of State's website at www.travel.state.gov.
2. Purchase travel insurance. Travel insurance can act as a secondary policy to your current health insurance and will help with such issues as trip delay, baggage issues and trip interruption as well. Travel agents can sell travel insurance.
3. Leave copies of your passport, airline tickets, traveler's checks, and any credit cards you plan to use with a family member or trusted friend. Pack a copy of these documents with you as well in a separate location than the originals. Place a card with your name and address inside your luggage, as well as on the outside. Carry the exact change for public transportation. Buying passes as well makes traveling via public transportation easier.
4. Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs of the countries to which you are traveling. Remember, the U.S. Constitution does not follow you! While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. If you get into trouble while traveling abroad, first contact the nearest U.S. embassy. Visit <http://usembassy.state.gov/> for a list of the U.S. embassies.
5. Keep travel numbers handy. Have the words "hotel" and "taxi" programmed on your cell-phone speed dial. For the trip, change the numbers, but leave the pre-programmed titles the same providing instant access to the important numbers.
6. Purchase a pre-paid international calling card or activate the international calling plan on your cell phone. Know in advance about roaming charges and extra fees. If traveling independently of a tour group or cruise, have someone write directions to your hotel address in the local language and keep it with you.
7. Postcards are helpful when there's a language barrier. Buy postcards of the places you want to see. An English description of the landmark is usually found on the back. Show the postcard to a taxi driver and he'll take you to the spot. Take a journal or notebook and record the sights and sounds and what pictures you have taken. If you are an avid photographer this will help identify the places you see in the pictures as well!
8. Pack an extra set of clothes in your carry-on luggage just in case your luggage is delayed or lost. Pack an empty duffel bag inside your main piece of luggage for extra storage on the return trip.
9. Use a large water bottle to store toiletries. Instead of packing a complete shaving kit, fill the wide-mouth water bottle with items like razors, spare contact lenses, glasses, toothbrush, etc. You can use the water bottle on those day trips you take on vacation as well.
10. For children's clothes, assemble complete outfits (shirt, pants, underwear, socks) by placing the largest piece on the bottom and stack the rest on top of that. Then roll up into one bundle. This eliminates having to rummage through the suitcase each morning, as you just pull out a complete outfit that is ready to wear.
11. Purchase adapters for electrical items (most overseas locations have 220 volts, 50 Hz electricity).
12. Write a master packing list on your computer that should include everything you might pack for any given trip. Then, when you're going on a specific trip, you can cross off the stuff you won't need and you don't have to write up a new list for the next trip.

When you prepare and plan ahead, your dream vacation will certainly live up to expectations!



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March 25, 2008