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**Simple Planning Makes for a More Enjoyable Vacation**

**By Kathy Paauw**

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Simple Planning Makes for a More Enjoyable Vacation

June is "Rebuild Your Life" Month... time to think of ways that you can rejuvenate yourself and reconnect with those you care about most. If your vacation includes travel, I encourage you to plan at least one trip that is purely vacation. Make the first day of summer (June 21) your deadline for finalizing summer travel and vacation plans.

The annual family vacation is typically a time for fun and relaxation... if you plan ahead. For those who don't plan accordingly, it can also be a time of disaster, stress, and heartache. Unfortunately, most people don't associate planning with fun. I've learned that leaving even the smallest details unattended to can be a recipe for disaster. I'll illustrate my point by sharing some personal experiences.

Confirmed Airline Reservations... Ha!

Six years ago my family planned a summer vacation to Alaska. Because Alaska only has a couple months of warm weather, we knew that the month of July would be a busy time to travel there. That's why we purchased our airline tickets six months in advance. With paid tickets in hand, I called the airline the day before to confirm our reservations. They confirmed that we had paid reservations for the flight.

The next day we got to the airport 1.5 hours before departure time. That's when we were told that the flight was oversold and we did not have confirmed seats on the plane. I said, "How can this be? We bought these tickets six months ago! We were among the first passengers to purchase tickets for this flight! And we're here early... most other passengers have not even checked in yet!!" The agent behind the ticket counter explained to me that, because we had purchased the tickets so far in advance, seat assignments were not made at the time of purchase. (We since learned that most airlines do not have their computers set up for seat assignments until 60–90 days out.) Those who purchased tickets or called to request seat assignments within 60 days of departure had reserved seats. We were placed on the waiting list.

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Our story had a happy ending. We got the last three seats available... all in First Class! Although we had a favorable outcome, our vacation could have ended in disaster. This is one lesson I will never forget! I've just purchased airline tickets for December to Hawaii. Although the flight is almost sold out, the airline will not make seat assignments until 90 days prior to departure. Guess who has a reminder in her tickler file to call the airline in September! (Learn more about setting up your own tickler file here: [http://www.orgcoach.net/companystore\\_ickler\\_file.html](http://www.orgcoach.net/companystore_ickler_file.html) )

Guaranteed for Late Arrival to the Hotel... Ha!

The summer following our trip to Alaska, our family vacationed in Minnesota. Our flight was scheduled to land very late in the evening, so I asked our travel agent to set up a guarantee for late arrival when

she booked the hotel reservations. Our agent confirmed that she had given the hotel our credit card to hold the room. As planned, we arrived at the Doubletree Hotel at about 11:30 PM. When I went to the registration desk to check in, I was told that there were no rooms available. I was shocked! I presented them with a printout from our travel agent, which confirmed our guarantee for late arrival.

In search for a greater understanding of what a "guarantee for late arrival" meant, I asked to speak with the manager on duty. I asked him, "If we had not checked in tonight, would the hotel have billed our credit card for the room, even though there are no rooms available?" That's when I learned that the Doubletree Hotel's guarantee was only a one-way guarantee. He confirmed that this was their standard policy. Having difficulty comprehending this policy, I reframed the question: "So if we are paying for the room, why is someone else sleeping in it right now?" He informed me that the guarantee did not obligate them to provide accommodations in their hotel; it simply meant that they guaranteed we would have a place to sleep that night. As I stood at the counter, the desk attendant spent the next 20 minutes calling other hotels and motels in the area. Finally he informed me that they would put us up at no charge at the Prime Rate Motel down the road! Hardly the accommodations we had planned on... and "down the road" was 15 miles away!

When we returned home from our trip, I called the Doubletree Hotel headquarters in Phoenix to see if this was their corporate policy, or just the local policy for that particular location. I was shocked when their customer service rep informed me that this was "standard practice in the industry," adding that "the airlines do it all the time." From now on, when I know I will be checking in late, I ask explicit questions about a hotel's policy regarding guaranteed late arrivals.

How High Do Mosquitoes Fly?

Of course, some things are simply beyond our control, and no amount of planning can guarantee a flawless vacation. I remember one of my first trips to Jakarta, Indonesia, where my husband's brother and his family live. We had made the long flight halfway around the world, and I was exhausted. (A quick geography refresher: Jakarta is near the equator, and it is very hot and humid there.) We were staying in a nice hotel with the modern comforts of air conditioning and purified water... two important elements for me.

When we checked into the hotel, we were informed that they would be doing some electrical work on

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the elevator shafts, and would therefore be turning the electricity off for the entire hotel from 2:00 AM to 8:00 AM while they did the work. I thought to myself, "Well, by then I will be asleep and I won't even notice it."

Boy, was I wrong! At 2:40 AM I woke up in a sweat. By 3:00 AM I was really hot and sticky. I had a brilliant idea! We were on the 12th floor, and I decided to open the windows to let in some fresh air. There were no screens on the windows, but I figured that we were high enough off the ground that it would be safe to open them. I made an assumption that mosquitoes would not fly that high. Again, I was wrong. Within a few minutes I had 32 mosquito bites covering my body and more were buzzing in my ear. Now I was not only hot and sticky, but I also felt like one huge, itchy, miserable welt. (My husband only had two mosquito bites. For some reason, mosquitoes have always liked me more than him.) We ended up leaving our hotel room and walking around the lobby the rest of the night.

### Ten Tips for Planning Your Vacation

I hope that by sharing my personal experiences, you will avoid learning similar lessons the hard way.

And it goes to show that those little details in the planning of a vacation can make a huge difference in the outcome. You can make your next vacation relaxing and enjoyable by following these simple vacation planning tips.

1.

Keep your vacation planning information in one place. Create a labeled file folder ("Hawaii Vacation") and use it to keep your airline, hotel, car rental information, as well as maps or AAA guide books, tourist information, contact information for people you know in that city, etc. To read about some programs related to travel that you can download onto a handheld organizer, check out the applications mentioned on the Handango Website <http://www.handango.com>.

2.

Plan ahead for your wardrobe. Think about all of the activities you might do, and imagine what you'd want to wear for each activity. For example, on the beach you might want a swimsuit, cover-up, slip-on footwear or water shoes, a sun hat, sunglasses... maybe even a face mask, snorkel, and some flippers. Will the kids want shovels and buckets to build a sand castle? Do you need to supply your own beach towel, or will you be staying somewhere that supplies this for you? What about waterproof sunscreen? The more you can visualize yourself on the beach, the better prepared you will be. One helpful tool I've found for wardrobe planning is a Website that offers historical weather averages for thousands of cities around the globe.

<http://www.worldclimate.com/>

3.

Use a travel checklist. I've created a Packing List to get you started. Once you've tailored this to your needs, keep it in the travel file you've created. This will help you remember to pack both the basic necessities, as well as some of the more obscure things you might not remember but would want to take with you. <http://www.orgcoach.net/packlist.html>

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4.

Let children pack their own travel bags, and make sure their bag is small enough that they can carry it themselves. Help them select things they can do on the road or in the air: Walkman and cassettes or CDs, books, handheld video games, portable crafts, card games. Talk about seating arrangements ahead of time to avoid conflict among siblings about who will sit where.

5.

Pack a carry-on that is small enough to stay with you at all times. Include necessities that you must have, in the event that you get separated from your other luggage for a day. If you need to take medication on a regular basis, be sure this is with you, and not in your checked luggage. If you are combining a business and vacation trip and need something for a presentation the next day, take it in your carry-on rather than checking it.

6.

Plan early to get the best selection and to get early booking discounts. If you're really adventuresome and are not particular about where you want to go, you can also book reservations last-minute. There is some risk involved in doing this, but you can also get some great deals this way. CheapTickets ( <http://www.cheaptickets.com/> ) sells surplus seats, a.k.a. "distressed inventory," at some great bargains. If you have any concerns about your safety while traveling to a particular destination, you might check out a Website that offers a report on global hot spots to avoid:  
<http://www.airsecurity.com/hotspots/HotSpots.asp>

I've recently found a wonderful Website called SideStep <http://www.sidestep.com>, which does a search of more than 70 travel-related Websites and finds the best AVAILABLE flights, hotels, and rental cars on a given date. Many Websites will find the "best deals" but when you go to the site you discover that they are sold out for the dates you want. This site does not waste your time if a flight is sold out. For more links to some helpful travel-related sites, visit the travel section of my Links to Great Sites page.

For who insist on combining business and pleasure during your travels, I offer 10 Tips to Tame the Paper Tiger When You Travel.

<http://www.orgcoach.net/raveltips.html>

7.

If you're driving, you may wish to map out your trip ahead of time and make hotel reservations along the way if you are traveling during peak vacation time. Mapquest <http://www.mapquest.com> offers a helpful Website for mapping out your route and estimating travel time under normal driving conditions.

8.

If you're traveling to another country, check out the Currency Converter for International Exchange Rates.

<http://www.x-rates.com/calculator.html>

If you'd like to master a few useful phrases in a foreign language, visit the Foreign Language Assistance Website. It even contains some sound clips so you can pronounce words properly.

<http://www.travlang.com/languages/>

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9.

If your vacation plans include staying home rather than traveling, plan how you will spend your vacation to rejuvenate yourself. Perhaps there are some local attractions that you've been wanting to experience but have not had the time to experience. Are there people you want to connect with? Get clear about what you want to do and who you want to do it with, and then plan to make it happen. If your vacation includes having a friend or relative flying in to visit you, you can check the status of a flight to see if they will arrive on time. You can even get a real-time map of the plane and its progress, based on radar data. <http://www.flightview.com/>

Visit Earthcam <http://www.earthcam.com> to view hundreds of images from all over the world without leaving your chair. The digital images are updated regularly, and some are live.

10.

This is the most important tip of all: pack the right attitude. Let go of the "what if" and enjoy the moment. Remind yourself what matters most, and focus on that. If this is a vacation to get away and relax, then focus on activities and thoughts that will be relaxing. If your goal is to reconnect with family and build memories together, that can be done regardless of circumstances (missing a flight, not getting tickets to an event you wanted to attend, etc.). If your goal is to sight-see and take in some special attractions or shows, then plan ahead and make the reservations necessary to ensure that you can do what you want to do when you get there.

Kathy Paauw, President of Paaufferfully Organized, specializes in helping busy executives, professionals, and entrepreneurs declutter their schedules, spaces and minds. She is a certified business/personal coach and professional organizer. Contact her at <mailto:orgcoach@gte.net> or visit

her Website at <http://www.orgcoach.net> and learn how you can Find ANYTHING in 5 Seconds – Guaranteed!

### **Quickly: Take A Florida Vacation!**

**By Triston Huntsmin**

Attention everybody who feels like their life has gotten a bit too stressful and that a vacation is in order! It is time that you make your desire for a week or two of relaxing vacation a reality. How? It's simple! Start planning a Florida vacation today.

A Florida vacation is the perfect getaway for people who are feeling tired of the plight of everyday life. There is no better way to relax and re-focus than to spend some time away on a Florida vacation. Sometimes life is so busy that you really have to plan ahead, so your first step in planning a great vacation is to set aside time for it. Whether you can get away next month or next year, just having the dates marked away on your calendar will bring you great motivation to get through tough weeks and to be planning your Florida vacation.

Once you have nailed away a time for your trip, the next step is to really consider what kind of Florida

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vacation you want to have. Consider how you want to spend your precious few days away from work and normal life. For example, some couples or families may choose a Florida vacation that is filled with entertainment opportunities. If being busy and exploring things day and night sounds fun to you, then look to make your Florida vacation in an area that attracts a lot of visitors and has a lot of activities arranged. If, however, you are looking for a quiet getaway, consider planning your Florida vacation to a secluded beach or to a condo where all your needs will be met quietly.

You can look for the perfect destinations and begin making plans for your Florida vacation by talking with a travel agent or by doing some research online. You will have a far easier time getting excited about a trip when it is actually being planned and coming to shape. It is probably a good idea to look for accommodations before you look for airfare, so start right away at looking for the perfect accommodations for your Florida vacation. See what kinds of package deals you can find as you search. Often you will discover great deals that include airfare, housing, food and entertainment all in one great package. So don't be too quick to make your Florida vacation plans. Take your time and be intentional about the details. After all, you do want this to be the vacation of a lifetime.

Triston Huntsmin is a writer that gets many opportunities to travel. He always encourages people to consider a Florida vacation for the next time they want to steal away. See

for more.



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