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What the Smart Vacationer Knows

By Susan Dunn

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Vacation 101 - It's about having fun, peace of mind, not working and not worrying. If you do these things, you'll increase the chances of those things happening! And remember that the watchword today is not that it changes, but how fast it changes.

1. Pack those "small" things.

You haven't had a vacation for a while, so you're forgetting what a hang nail, an itchy mosquito bite and a heel blister are like.

Those "small" things get really "large" on a trip."

The nail clippers, bandaids, hair bands, suntan lotion, and Neosporin will not only cost you 5 times as much on your trip, they will cost you precious pleasure TIME while you hunt them down.

2. Check your medical insurance and car rental insurance two weeks before you leave.

Policies are different and you need to know WHAT will be covered on your trip and WHERE. Some policies cover accidents, injuries, and illness abroad and some do not. You also need to know what your car insurance covers and where. Call your insurance companies to make sure, get names, etc. and take this with you in writing.

3. Then fill in the gaps with travel insurance.

Pay for peace of mind. Consider the health insurance that includes air evac back to the US unless you relish emergency gall bladder surgery in El Disastro, Peru when you don't understand Spanish. Bring proof of your coverage in writing.

3. If you buy special travel insurance, for instance, cruise travel insurance, read the fine print to see what's covered.

What the Smart Vacationer Knows

It may give you another cruise if you have an accident for instance, that interrupts your vacation.

4. Adopt the mental attitude that you've never flown, cruised or gone by train before.

Why? Because it's changed since 9–11 and keeps on changing. New security measures, restrictions, and time-consuming safety procedures are being added all the time. On my latest cruise I heard people saying, "They don't do it this way on cruise line X." Little did they know!

5. Call ahead for important information but, sigh, don't rely on it.

Go ahead and bring the hair dryer, converter, travel iron and toiletries and anything important to you,

and be pleasantly surprised if they're there. Do not trust the person on the phone, or your friend who has just returned. It changes. Realistically, it's impossible to keep up with.

6. Keep documentation papers.

On my last cruise a couple's luggage got really torn up. I listened to them argue it out with the purser. The cruise line claimed it says in their papers they aren't responsible; it's the baggage handlers on the dock ... or maybe the airline. At any rate, at some time the couple is going to have to prove what the luggage cost. Photographs are also helpful.

7. Which brings up a practical point: your luggage and common sense.

The above-mentioned couple was claiming, She - that she'd paid \$300 for her fabric-type roll-on luggage. He - that his "custom-made all leather carryon" was not replaceable. Use your own judgment, but seems to me the best practical measure these days is to buy the sturdiest least expensive luggage you can find. I think it unrealistic to imagine your luggage won't be at least nicked, scratched or slightly torn, and you can save yourself some emotional turmoil by preparing for that fact, i.e., don't give a toddler a crystal goblet and then be "surprised" it gets broken.

8. Hot tubs and bathing suits.

Some hot tubs contain enough bromine (via health regulations) to not only bleach out your bathing suit, but loosen elastic, leaving you with a bleached bag. This information is posted near the hot tub, but won't help you if you don't know beforehand. Be practical. Bring an old suit, or bring an inexpensive one and treat it like a Bic pen: disposable.

9. If you're traveling abroad, alert your credit card company ahead of time.

10. Take your Emotional Intelligence with you.

Traveling is a microcosm of life because it's full of new things, and often no learning curve. EQ competencies such as quick reality testing, and interpersonal relationship skills are extremely helpful. Brush up!

Also observe others in the ever-occurring stressful situations and you'll see what works and what doesn't.

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Smart Children And Smart Toys

By Jessica Davis

Play would always be attached with the term "toys". Toys are the source of fun for children kids and even adults too. If used well, they could be aids in achieving learning and fun both at the same time. What could smart toys do? How could smart parents use these toys for the development of their children?

There are very helpful points that could help out in making your child even smarter:

* Each child has his or her own preference of toys. Let your child express him by deciding on what toys is fun for him or her. With this, it will be easy for the child to think creatively and use the toys.

* Childhood is a time to build bonds of friendship among peers. Interaction toys would be of great help as children get along with their peers. Toys like sport game toys would allow them to meet and socialize with children of the same age.

* Toys could boost the self-confidence of a child. There are these toys which when used could promote the reliance to one's self by a child or children. These come through construction toys. When a child builds it, he also builds the faith in his skill that this building may not be destroyed.

* Thinking independently is thinking smart for children. As they play using toys that will enhance their thinking and logic skills such as puzzles and mazes would be of great help in polishing one's head.

* A bit similar with interaction toys are relationship toys- these help the communication skills of children. We know how important communication is, therefore, these set of toys would really be smart. These are really aid a child to meet people talk and listen and in the end, build links.

Toys are made not merely to be played with without purpose but we must see to it they learn and bring out the smart young people from them through smart choices of toys. Toys are here not to be used as early symbols of violence.

Jessica Davis is a freelance writer for the Baby Times. She writes a regular column which is published every Thursday. Her latest 'favorite pick' is



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