

Top 10 Travel Tips

Planning a vacation? Think you cannot afford it right now? Well, guess again! In these economic times, it seems that everyone is trying to stretch their hard-earned money as far as they can. The first thing that I would recommend to someone trying to make the most of their travel budget is to enlist the help of an experienced travel consultant. There seems to be a misconception that you will pay more to use a travel consultant when, in reality, you will save time, money and maybe your vacation!

There are certain times of year that are very affordable for what many consider “expensive” destinations. It is helpful to discuss your interests, expectations and budget with your travel consultant so they can make recommendations based on your needs. An experienced travel consultant can tell you the average cost for a particular trip.

If you are interested in saving money when planning a vacation, start early. Most cruise lines, hotels and resorts reward those customers that book their travel in advance by offering early booking discounts, complimentary upgrades and many other amenities. Planning early also allows you time to learn about your destination and the many things to do and see while you're there.

Remember that most destinations accept debit/ATM cards and credit cards. U.S. currency is widely accepted in most Caribbean destinations and Mexico. It helps to have small bills for tipping, \$20 worth of \$1 bills is handy when you need to tip your airport shuttle, hotel bellman, etc. Once you decide where you are going, you can think about the various things you will do while you are there and put yourself on a spending limit.

Traveling is contagious. Once bitten by the “travel bug,” you will want to go again and again. There are many benefits of traveling including re-connecting, celebrating a special occasion, relaxing or adventure. It is invigorating to go somewhere new, and it renews your mind and perspective of the world. Just pick up a copy of the book “1,000 Places To See Before You Die” by Patricia Schulz and read the introduction. You will immediately wonder why you do not presently have a vacation on the calendar. Schulz quotes Mark Twain at the end of the introduction: “Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.” This quote is a constant reminder for me that travel is not a luxury; it is a necessity! Each year, I am realizing what my grandmother told me as a child: “Life goes by faster every year.”

If you think you cannot afford to travel, I would ask you, “How can you afford not to?”

Global Escapes is a locally owned and operated travel agency started in 1988 by Ella Grondahl. Tiffany Hines, Ella's daughter, has worked with Global Escapes since it opened and in 1998, she became co-owner. Tiffany is married with two daughters and resides in Oconee County. You can reach Global Escapes at 706-549-1164 or travel@globalescapes.com. Global Escapes is located at 697 South Milledge Avenue in Athens.

10 Get a passport! You never know when that super trip will come along, and it helps to be prepared. A passport is required to travel anywhere outside the US.

9 Put your name, address and phone number on the inside of your suitcase. In the event your tag gets destroyed, your bag can still be identified.

8 Remember your necessities: Sunscreen, bug spray and medicines. These are all things that usually cost much more to purchase abroad.

7 Make two copies of your passport, one to leave behind and one to pack in your suitcase. In the event your passport gets lost or stolen, this will help expedite the replacement.

6 Take a look at www.cdc.gov/travel to check for recommended vaccinations for your destination. Also, be sure to check the TSA's website if you are traveling through airports. Security guidelines and regulations change, and this will help you to pass through security more efficiently by knowing ahead of time.

5 Always reconfirm flights at least 24 hours before departure to avoid surprises on the day you depart. This also allows you time to review the baggage requirements and charges.

4 Allow plenty of time for flights, checking in. Keep your stress to a minimum by arriving at the airport at least two to three hours before an international flight and allow plenty of time for connections.

3 Purchase travel insurance.

2 Travel with the same caution in international destinations as you would in the U.S.

...and the #1 top travel tip

Relax and be patient; you are on vacation. Do not expect things to be as they are at home. Remember that this is why you are leaving home! Regardless of mishaps or weird experiences, roll with it and try not to let it ruin your vacation. These crazy experiences are what make great stories to share for years to come.

