

TRAVEL SMART TIPS

Don't Let Travel Hassles Ruin Your Holiday Spirit

(NAPSA)—The presents are wrapped and bundled with care in anticipation that the whole family soon will be there. But traveling isn't always as easy as you expect, from trip-planning to luggage-lugging and long flights—but don't fret!

To lessen the hassle of holiday trip-planning and to prepare yourself for any surprises along the way, American Express Travel specialists offer these tips for stress-free travel:

1. Program your cell-phone with the toll-free service numbers of your travel agent, airlines, hotels, credit cards and car rental companies. If something goes wrong you won't have to join long lines of other disgruntled passengers, but speed-dial your travel agent or the company's customer service department to get the help you need.

2. Pack a picnic and lots of water. Faced with intense competition and soaring fuel prices, airlines have cut back on amenities, including meals. You don't want to face a long flight with no more nourishment than a bag of pretzels. Pack a picnic lunch for everyone in the family or pick up snacks at airport food courts. You'll find plenty of healthy options among all the food vendors stepping in to fill the need left by the airlines.

3. Be prepared for delays and long lines with plenty of reading material, your music player, crossword puzzles, etc. Bring games and toys for the kids, and if you have infants, bring formula and diapers, which are not available in airports.

4. Lessen your time on traffic-clogged roadways—and the risk of missing your flight—by avoiding airport parking. At holiday time airport parking lots are slow moving and overcrowded. You're much better off taking a shuttle and leaving your car in an off-airport parking lot.



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5. Travel light. Airlines today have become very strict about enforcing the two bags per passenger rule: one checked bag and one carry-on item. Some airlines charge an extra fee for heavy luggage. Avoid the stress and extra costs by mailing gifts ahead of time to lighten your load.

6. Avoid pre-travel stress. Spending your precious days getting all the parts of your trip together can leave you depleted of the holiday spirit. Booking trips on the American Express Travel site (www.americanexpress.com/travel) allows you to quickly find the latest competitive fares and offers for everything from car rentals and cruises to last minute deals and vacation packages. Eligible Cardmembers can take advantage of special benefits, discounts and rewards that make the experience all the merrier.

7. Fly on Christmas Day or New Year's Day rather than the day before, when planes will be packed and fares more expensive. On the holiday itself, planes are relatively empty and better deals are often available.

If you want assistance planning the perfect trip, www.americanexpress.com/travel can even help you find American Express travel specialists to speak with live. Now that's stress-free travel planning.

Happy Holidays!