

Holiday Travel

Taking The Humbug Out Of Holiday Travel

(NAPSA)—Travel during the holidays can be difficult: It seems like everyone is trying to get somewhere at the same time. That means traffic jams and long airport waits for the unprepared. Fortunately, by thinking ahead and using a bit of travel sense, it's possible to make your trip more enjoyable.

For example, to maximize holiday happiness and minimize coal-in-the-stocking grief, follow these helpful tips compiled by the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA):

- Contact a travel agent well in advance of your trip to secure the lowest-priced airline seats, hotel rooms and rental cars that usually sell out quickly for holiday travel.

- Packing light saves time and energy when it comes to filling the trunk with fragile bags packed with gifts or racing to fill the last empty space in the overhead bin. One tip for packing lighter is to ship your gifts to your destination ahead of time.

- To avoid delays at the airport, avoid peak travel days—those immediately before and immediately after the holidays. If possible, have a friend drive you to the airport or take a shuttle or public transportation. Or stay at an airport hotel the night before an early flight.

- If you're traveling with children, be sure to pack items to occupy them in case you run into delays—and for something to do during the trip. For example, try assembling a fun bag: Make one for each child with stickers, paper and washable markers, action figures, magnetic games and puzzles and a pillow. If you use these par-



A little advance planning—especially when you have kids in tow—can help take the headaches out of holiday travel.

ticular bags for trips only, they'll remain novel and kids will look forward to the journey.

Customer service

No matter what your holiday destination, a travel agent puts a face on the planning process—and serves as a friendly voice if your trip doesn't turn out exactly as planned.

If you have a problem with a particular part of your travel experience, the agent is there to act on your behalf to see that restitution is made. ASTA, for example, is aggressively fighting to improve the travel experience—air transportation in particular—for all consumers, not just those with access to the Internet.

And remember, travel agents provide unbiased advice. They work for you, the client, not a travel supplier. It makes sense for them that a happy customer will be a repeat customer. To learn more about holiday travel or to find an ASTA travel agent, visit www.travelsense.org.