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Kelley Keehn

Sun, December 31, 2006



Making travel easier

By KELLEY KEEHN

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In October, I shared my ideas with you on how to avoid "travel trauma."

As a new but already experienced business traveller, I've learned a number of tricks and tips that I wish I'd known long ago.

- Online comparison shopping is a great start for arranging your own travel itinerary. There's expedia.ca and travelocity.ca, just to name a couple of the many websites available. When venturing off to a new city, these websites boast search functions that rate hotels, compare airlines and much more. But when booking your hotel, you might consider making a direct reservation. If you reserve through most online agencies, they require the full amount of your stay paid in advance. The hotel will only require your credit card to secure the room and won't charge you before hand.

- If you own a gold or platinum credit card, get acquainted with benefits and features your card or bank offer. You might find that you don't need to purchase extra vehicle insurance – or not the full amount anyway. Also take time to explore your credit card company's travel agency via telephone. I've only used mine for flights, but they've always come in cheaper than any online service, or going directly to an airlines. A short phone call could save you hundreds of dollars!

- I feel that the business traveller's greatest asset of all time has to be Google Maps. Even if you're not renting a car, it's essential to know the distance between destinations in a new city. Just visit Google.com, click on maps and then click on "get directions." Enter in your location and the desired one and within seconds you'll have a detailed map, directions and distance to your destination.

- When checking out of a hotel, I can't help myself. I must use every free soap, shampoo and shower cap. I conserve on towels, but I figure if someone is shelling out for my room, I'm going to make the best of it. I travel with half a suitcase (just

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about) of salon-quality toiletries. After travelling for months, my bathroom is overflowing with mini-products I'll never use. So what's a pack rat to do? Why not consider bringing those freebies home and donating them to a youth, women's or homeless shelter?

- Consider staying with major chains as much as possible. Most of the big guys offer hard-to-resist reward programs, complimentary upgrades and luxuries for the frequent guest. Plus, when you're away from home often, visiting a chain that you know can be a welcome comfort.

- Last, but not least, even the most seasoned traveller will forget essential but not obvious items.

Why not create a packing list and add to it with each trip? Try e-mailing it to yourself. Many itineraries are sent in a digital format, so create a travel folder in your e-mail program and keep this list handy. For a sample list to start with, visit my website at www.kelleykeehn.com, scroll down the page and click on the Edmonton Sun logo. Please send me your items and I'll update the list regularly.

Deals and experiences abound for the frequent business traveller. Instead of reading the paper or rushing for your headphones on your next flight, ask the person next to you for tips and tricks. Chances are that person's en route even more than you and can share a gold nugget; not to mention, help pass the time.

Happy trails!

Kelley Keehn, lecturer, personal coach and author of The Prosperity Factor, uncovers the "inner games" people play surrounding wealth. Visit Kelley at www.TheProsperityFactor.com or call her at 780-732-0144. Letters to the editor should be sent to mailbag@edmsun.com.

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