



Enjoyment Comes with Planning

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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This fall I will be travelling to India for the first time. Even though I have been to several other destinations over the years and didn't know what adventures were ahead of me when I chose them, this trip to the other side of the world requires much more planning and commitment. The flight alone is twenty-three hours each way!

I realize that I cannot plan every detail (and don't want to as that would take some of the excitement out of it) but also know that doing my research and preparing will not only ensure that things will go well but also prevent unnecessary anxiety from creeping in.

If you are thinking that you might want to visit another country, begin planning several months ahead and use the following list to guide you:

1. Destination - There are approximately 260 countries in the world, so you have plenty of options. Consider weather patterns, safety issues and economy when you are making your decision. You will likely not have as good a trip if you arrive at the height of monsoon season, in an active war zone or if costs are higher than you can afford.
2. Consultation - Even though we can get wonderful information in seconds through the internet, it is always helpful to talk with someone from the country you will visit. You will likely find someone through a College, University or Immigration Settlement organization.
3. Passport and Government Laws - Besides travel documents, you need to know what specific requirements there are in the country where you will visit. When you know exactly what airport taxes and documents are needed you will be less vulnerable to scams and delays.
4. Accommodations - Cheapest is not always best. Neither is most expensive. Book through a reputable service or check reviews of previous guests before you make a commitment.
5. Route and Travel - I assumed that I would take Air Canada east to India but now am thinking that going west with another airline would be faster and most convenient. Consider all the options before you.
6. Immunization - You will need to meet with a Travel Nurse to discuss the recommended shots and set up a schedule to obtain them. You will need to take a list of the exact regions that you will visit and also be prepared to pay for what is not covered by your health plan.
7. Insurance - Don't just buy a policy - understand exactly what it provides. You will not only need flight cancellation but also coverage for treatment and medications should you need them while away from home.
8. Currency - Even if the country accepts debit and credit cards, you will likely want to have cash in the currency of the region. Banks often need up to a week to order exactly what you need. Even if you take some cash with you, you might need more during your holidays. When I was in Jamaica, it was recommended that I exchange money at a small corner business rather than a bank in order to get a good rate. Ask the hotel desk to staff or an airline representative about where to find the best deal.

9. Luggage and carry-on bags - When I returned from the Caribbean, I learned about baggage weight limits - the hard way. One overweight suitcase cost me a hundred dollars whereas two bags would only have been a fifty dollars fee. It is better to not completely fill your luggage so that you have room for souvenirs. Perhaps one smaller suitcase will fit into a larger one and you will then have adequate room for the trip home. Always have a carry-on bag with your tickets, insurance, power cords, laptop, medications and important documents that you will have with you at all times.

10. Back up - Prepare a computer file with information that you or your emergency contact can access if something goes wrong. Your passport, credit card and health care numbers should be recorded as well as all of your travel information including dates, routes, hotels and telephone contact numbers.