Five Travel Tips for a Stress-Free Vacation

It's every traveler's worst nightmare: standing in the long security line, overburdened by luggage, screaming child in tow, and then realizing that you just left an important item at home. It's what we all want to avoid. With proper preparation, this can be avoided with these five simple travel tips to take control of your vacation and make it a breeze.

1. Pack Ahead: Nothing is more frustrating than realizing everything you forgot right when it's too late to go back and get it, especially when you have been thinking about how you don't want to forget it for a few weeks. When you start to pack ahead of time, you will be less likely to forget an important item at home. You can even make a list of what you want to pack leading up to your vacation so you can check items off as you pack them.

2. Read Reviews: When you arrive at your hotel, it is a huge disappointment to see that what was shown on the website is completely different than what you actually get. This can be the same for any restaurant, museum or other experience on your trip. If you read the reviews of attractions and hotels before you make your plans, you can follow other people's travel tips and help to avoid the disappointment later on.

3. Don't Over-Plan: When you commit yourself to too much sightseeing and event attendance, it will make your vacation just as stressful as your overbooked everyday life. Of course you want to do your research and plan for your vacation, but you should also leave time for spontaneous events that pop up as well as time to relax.

4. Leave Time for Travel: Along with making sure to leave time for extra activities you may discover on your trip, you will also want to make sure that when you do plan something, you also plan for the time it will get take to get to and from places, especially the airport. It is so stressful to be running late for your flight and worrying that you may miss it. American Airlines recommends arriving at least 60 minutes prior to departing if you are not checking bags and at least 90 minutes early if you are checking bags.

5. Alerts: Save yourself the hassle and sign up for alerts when you are on vacation. You can sign up to be alerted if any of your flights are delayed or changed, which can help you to adjust your own timing to get to the airport. You may also want to sign up for weather alerts so you don't end up driving an hour to the beach only to find it is going to storm soon.

Vacation is supposed to be a stress-free time where you can enjoy your time off so don't let yourself fall victim to the usual stress triggers. Plan ahead by following our five travel tips, and you will be able to enjoy your vacation much more knowing that you are prepared for anything.