

## The last minute travel primer

Business executives often travel frequently and are always prepared to leave for far-off destinations on a moment's notice. They've got the program down. Bags are packed in a jiffy and the seasoned traveler leaves home confident that essentials and nice-to-haves are not left behind. Have you ever taken a trip under hasty circumstances, only to find you've forgotten half of what you really need? Experience is a great teacher, so check out these tips from the pros and smooth out the wrinkles of last minute travel.

If you're traveling by car, transportation issues are simplified. Check your oil, water and tires, including your spare. Fill up on your way out of town. If possible, drive at night. There's less traffic so you'll encounter fewer traffic problems. If you're traveling through or to a major metropolitan area, plan your arrival to miss the heavy commute hours. This can save you a few frustrating hours stuck in stalled traffic.

Traveling by air? Last minute travel by air can be costly if you book by conventional methods. If you have even a day or two prior to departure, the very first task on your agenda is a quick and diligent search of your local papers and online resources such as craigslist, auction sites and E-bay. Google is also worth a shot. Just type, 'air tickets for sale' followed by your destination airport. You just may get lucky and find a great deal.

Now to packing: before you start tossing things willy-nilly into your bag, take a few minutes to jot down what you need to do and bring. This little trick may sound silly, but you'll be surprised to find how helpful it is to organize on paper beforehand. Be sure to include a 'before leaving' category with tasks and errands such as stopping your mail and newspaper, returning library books or arranging for pet care. People who frequently make last minute travel trips keep such a list handy at all times. If you have medicines you need every day, get them on your list. Organize your clothing choices so you can mix and match most items. Plan to wear bulky items, such as an overcoat or boots.

Whenever possible, stick with a carryon. You'll save time and hassles, both at check-in and your destination. Rolling your clothing saves space and reduces wrinkling. Upon arrival, hang dresses, pants and shirts in a steamy bathroom for 20 minutes. You won't even need to iron.

Travel restrictions on baggage items change so frequently and are quite precise on items like shampoo and lotion. Just one additional ounce of shampoo or the wrong type of container results in confiscation. Avoid this problem by buying these items when you arrive.

So don't get in a tizzy over a last minute travel situation. Be thoughtful in your planning and stay organized. The worst case is then having to pay full price on your air ticket!