

Ed Perkins on Travel

By Ed Perkins

SENIORS ON THE GO: GET ORGANIZED FOR 2007 TRAVEL

If you're planning to travel this year - especially early in the year - now is a good time to make sure you'll be ready to go. Most of the potential problems have been around for a while, but it's all too easy to forget them until they actually arise. And you may see a few new ones. Here's my list of the most important.

Passport. If you're planning on flying out of country early in the year, beginning Jan. 23, you will need a valid passport to leave or re-enter the United States. This requirement includes even Canada, the Caribbean and Mexico - places where you may have become used to relatively easy cross-border formalities. The passport office expects to be swamped early in the year, so if yours has expired or you don't have one, get your application in right away.

If you are cruising to a foreign country from a U.S. port or crossing the Canadian or Mexican border by car or bus, you have another year before the passport requirement kicks into gear. And, by that time, there's a good chance the U.S. and other regional governments will agree to some new, less complicated form of ID that will still suffice. But if you plan to travel this winter or spring, don't gamble: get the passport.

Of course, the requirement does not apply to travel to the mainland from offshore territories of the U.S. - provided you haven't visited any non-U.S. areas. Thus, you can fly from Puerto Rico to the mainland without a passport, but if you take a side trip to the British Virgin Islands, you'll need a passport to get back to Puerto Rico.

Medical. You know that Medicare doesn't cover you in any foreign country, and that even the Medicare supplement programs provide only minimal benefits. If you're planning to book a cruise or tour outside the U.S. in 2007, make sure that you arrange to buy whatever medical (and cancellation) insurance you might need within a week of the time you first pay for the trip. That way, most policies won't deny a claim for a problem that might occur because of a pre-existing medical condition.

Plan for the prescriptions you'll need, and keep your travel medications in their original packaging. Although I haven't seen any problems lately, you still face

a possible question about a bunch of unidentified pills.

Baggage Planning. If you plan to fly somewhere, decide early on how you want to pack your stuff when you travel, and make sure you have the right luggage. These days, as you know, rules on airline baggage carry-on are pretty tight. The main worry is the limitation on the amount of liquids and gels you can take into a cabin - no more than 3 ounces of anything, and no more than you can fit into a 1-gallon plastic bag (such as Ziploc). If you need more than that, don't worry - the rules just say you can't carry it in the cabin. Rules on what you're allowed to pack in checked bags haven't changed much, and they're pretty easy. But that means packing your regular toilet kit in a checked bag, and given the rough treatment checked bags get, that probably means a water-tight toilet kit.

One other item: If you like to bring your allowed bottle of "duty-free" liquor on your flight home, buy it at an airport shop located after security. Then, it's OK on your first flight to the U.S. But if you have a connecting flight, you'll have to transfer it to a checked bag after you pass through U.S. customs.

(Send e-mail to Ed Perkins at eperkins@mind.net. Perkins' new book for small business and independent professionals, "Business Travel When It's Your Money," is now available through www.mybusinesstravel.com or www.amazon.com)

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SPORTS TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. Ohio State is 18-19 in bowl games, while Florida has a 15-18 record. The Buckeyes are 4-0 in the BCS since 1998, while the Gators are 1-2.
2. Ohio State defeated Notre Dame 34-20 in the Fiesta Bowl, while Florida beat Iowa 31-24 in the Outback Bowl.
3. Florida defeated Maryland 56-23 in the 2002 Orange Bowl. Southern California upended Oklahoma 55-19 in the 2005 Orange Bowl, which determined the national champion.
4. Texas quarterback Vince Young rushed for 200 yards on 19 carries and three touchdowns in a 41-38 victory over Southern California in the 2006 Rose Bowl. Southern Cal's LenDale White also rushed for three TDs in the game.
5. Matt Leinart threw five TD passes in Southern Cal's 55-19 win over Oklahoma in the 2005 Orange Bowl.
6. Tee Martin threw a 79-yard TD pass to Peerless Price in Tennessee's 23-16 victory over Florida State in the 1999 Fiesta Bowl.
7. Peter Warrick scored 20 points (three touchdowns and a 2-point conversion) in Florida State's 46-29 win over Virginia Tech in the 2000 Sugar Bowl. Texas QB Vince Young equaled Warrick's mark when he scored 20 points (3 TDs, 2-point conversion) in the 2006 Rose Bowl.

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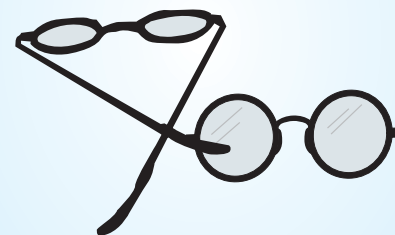
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