

HEALTHFUL TIPS

Zap Holiday Travel Stress

If you're like many people, you have plans to travel this holiday season. Traveling at any time of the year can be stressful, but the sheer number of people traveling for the holidays and the unpredictable weather can make holiday travel especially stressful. With a little planning, you should be able to keep stress to a minimum. Expect some challenges along the way and keep a light heart—you'll end up with some good stories to tell. Here are some tips to zap holiday travel stress and perhaps even enjoy your holiday travel this year.

BY CAR

- Have your oil changed, tire pressure checked, repairs done, and older cars checked by a mechanic to make sure your car is up for the trip ahead of time.
- Better to be safe than sorry—pack an emergency kit (a shovel, windshield scraper and small broom, flashlight with extra batteries, battery powered radio, water, snack food including energy bars, matches and small candles, extra hats/socks/mittens, first aid kit with pocket knife, necessary medications, blankets, tow chain/rope, sand /kitty litter, booster cables, emergency flares/reflectors, and a cell phone charger for car. You know how it works—if you pack it, you won't need it.
- Scope out alternative routes before you leave so you'll be familiar with your options in case you need them. Be sure to have a map or map app with you.

- Give yourself extra time so you are not feeling rushed and can break up long trips with frequent pre-planned stops. Look for stops that will enhance your trip and let you get out and move around for a while.
- Download apps before you head out that help you find the cheapest gas and cleanest bathrooms.
- Do what you gotta do to maintain your sanity—take earplugs, listen to a book on CD, sing along to your favorite tunes, and of course keep the kids entertained with movies, books, games, and music.
- Pack a cooler full of healthy snacks and drinks for the road and avoid fast food and gas station food if possible. If you do need to get food on the road, choose wisely.
- You'll find the least traffic in the early morning and late at night. Fewer cars and sleeping children are a good combination.

BY AIR

- Check your airline's luggage weight restrictions and fees as these frequently change.
- Use travel apps to keep in the loop on your flight status, delays, and even estimated times to get through security.
- Choose nonstop flights if possible to reduce the risk of getting stuck at a connecting airport or having your luggage lost.

- If you can pack light, do it. In most cases, your best option is still a small carry-on.
- Earplugs are a great investment—you never know when a nearby two-year-old is going to have a melt-down.
- Take some distractions with you to help pass the time (book, music, games).
- Don't come up empty-handed on snacks. Take protein bars, nuts, peanut butter, protein powder, bags of fresh-cut veggies and other healthy snacks with you. Buy a calorie-free drink before you board the plane.
- Don't take wrapped gifts with you on the plane—better to go with gift cards or to ship gifts ahead of time.
- Consider traveling on days that are less busy—starting early or extending your trip by a few days.
- Early morning flights are more likely to be on-time.
- Have phone numbers for everything: hotels, car rental agency, airline, and travel companions.
- Consider a flu shot and use hand sanitizer frequently to keep illness from ruining your trip.
- Get up, walk around if possible, and stretch your arms and legs at least once an hour.

Safe and happy travels!