

Whatever the economic or political situation, mobs of people will be traveling this holiday season. Airports will be crowded, and airplane seats will be even more jammed. Commuting to the airport or anywhere else on the way will be slow and frustrating. So, what can a senior do to make the holiday ordeal at least a bit more bearable? Here are some tips that are worth trying during this very, very trying time of the year.



1. Get going very early or very late. If you're driving some long miles to join your kids and grandkids for the holidays, get on the road just before dawn. If you live in an area with heavy commuter traffic, be sure you're beyond the most congested roads by no later than 7 am. If you can forego your regular sleep hours for that important drive, start at midnight or a bit later, when roadways are less crowded. You can always get your sleep earlier in the day, or take a quick snooze after you arrive at your destination.

2. If you're flying, try the same early bird plan. Red eyes (flights after midnight) are less crowded, and airports, highways and parking lots are not nearly as busy in those small hours. Also, if you check prices, you may find that red eyes are the most economically priced and last to be fully booked.

3. Look for the silver lining in the skies. Well, at least look for holiday travel costs that involve paying out less silver and greenbacks. All travel agencies, whether online or on the street, get price information changes virtually by the minute. Before you put out big bucks for a travel schedule involving air, car rental, train, bus and/or hotel expenses, check all sources to get the best bargains. Be flexible in your departure options, including traveling days before or days after the heaviest holiday travel rush.

4. Maybe you're just fed up with the growing hassle of flying these days. Think of the airport security measures, the delays and the escalating costs. So, maybe consider another mode of transportation. Greyhound, Amtrak and other land-travel sources offer senior discounts up to 15 percent. An important advantage buses have over airlines is that they take passengers from downtown to downtown, instead of dumping them dozens of miles from the actual destination.

Now that the cost of gasoline has fallen from the highway robbery price of more than \$4 a gallon to less than \$2, consider driving to your holiday destination. Auto travel is also very convenient because you can pile everything into your car, including gifts and suitcases, and never have to worry about them until you pile out to see your kids and grandkids.

5. When you pack for your holiday trip, make sure you have all medications you'll need for the days you'll be away from home. Then add another week's supply, just in case. Of course, be sure they're all up to date, are properly labeled, and you have copies of all vital prescriptions with you.

Maybe the most important health-related item you can take with you is a strong, positive state of mind. You know there'll be delays, frustrations and inconveniences. However, in spite of all that,

always be aware of what holiday time means to families. To avoid hysterical rushing and griping at employees, allow plenty of time for getting to the airport and to meet other timely schedules.

No matter what the confusing situation, demonstrate your confidence and self-control to members of your family who travel with you, so they'll experience less stress. If you succeed, you may restore the ho-ho-ho in holiday cheer.