



As with everyone else who roams, we found that since the early 1990s, do-it-yourself travel planning became an internet blessing. Just by clicking our computer or hand-held doo-hickey, we'd book anything to anywhere. We often boasted it was cheaper than by calling travel agents.

It was exciting for awhile, knowing agents work on commissions that add to travel prices, so DIY saved us money. However, over the past half-dozen years, we've found it preferable and often more economical to rely again on expert hometown and/or online agents.

Here are a few reasons why we've changed our minds:

*1. Agents get the best prices.* Despite your skills with a SmartPhone and laptop, the pros are tuned in 24-7 to all aspects of the ever-changing travel business. If you regularly give a trusted agent current personal info on plans, budgets and preferences, you'll get top deals at the best prices. And you won't need to spend hours surfing every corner of the internet comparative shopping for bargains.

*2. Help, I'm stranded!* Whatever the problem you face on the road, in the air or at sea, your savvy agent will be available to get you out of it. Cancelled flights, hotel booking errors, credit card screw-ups, passport glitches, police problems and other emergency situations.

*3. The travel expert has the latest word.* The pro is always ready to offer advice on bargains, current regional dangers, scams, illnesses, weather, official regulations, insurance requirements and every other aspect of travel. Even if you consider yourself a good internet surfer and travel guru, you can't possibly keep up with all complicated and ever-changing travel situations.

4. *Are your bags packed?* Senior retirees with open schedules are the best resources for last-minute deals. Knowing your availability and preferences, that agent pal can get you on half-price intercontinental flights tonight or deep-discount luxury cruises sailing tomorrow.

5. *Last and not least.* Make sure your agent is always aware that you are a vital resource in helping the travel pro earn a living. When you spread the good word among family, friends and other seniors, it enhances the agent's income. This buddy-buddy relationship will boost your chances of getting top travel deals at the very best prices.