



The secret is compatibility. If that doesn't happen before the trip and maintained throughout, no one will enjoy the time together. And if it gets too contentious, that troubled journey may be the first and last for what will become former pals.

Before departure, sit down together to determine how decisions will be made and who's in charge. When a group sets out on a trip, forget about democracy. One person should be responsible for planning the entire enterprise, mapping out the general schedule and then call all the shots throughout the trip. For instance, if it'll be a multi-night road trip with a carload of pals, a bus excursion or a caravan of several cars, the person in charge should put everything together. If a bus must be chartered, hotel rooms reserved, gasoline/food stopping points chosen and other road trip decisions, the boss rules. Suggestions should be welcomed, but the final decision should rest with one person.

For cruises, choices are easier, once everyone has agreed on a specific ship and destination. The boss can do the research, and once everyone is signed up, a more democratic process goes into effect. When aboard, everyone is equal again, for meals, social events, entertainment, shore excursions and other onboard activities.

One good aspect of a gang of pals sailing together on a cruise is personal freedom, and it may not be necessary to do everything together. That can't happen on group road trips, airline flights and bus excursions, where time and schedules rule everything.

Of course, it's unfair for one person to be responsible for every aspect of a complex group trip. That's when delegation should happen. Another person, considered by all a math wizard, may be elected financial monitor. The duties include computing all expenses necessary throughout the trip.

The math whiz also negotiates beforehand for air, bus, cruise, hotel or other anticipated services for the trip, to get the best deals for the best pricing. That same person should also determine how the expenses will be shared among the traveling group, and must collect to pay all the bills.

Another delegated job is time monitor. For instance, that person is first up in the morning to make sure all are ready to meet schedules throughout the day. The time monitor also determines when to meet for meals, entertainment, social functions and other shared events.

Of course, organizing a trip with a group of friends is not always complicated. Many decisions could be made simply through mutual agreement. However, if your flight is at 8:03 a.m., everyone would agree that being roused out at 6:03 a.m. is an absolute necessity.