

Taking the Stress Out of Business Travel

By Pat Cataldo, Managing Director



When Dorothy hit the Yellow Brick Road in Munchkin Land, she had but one goal: get home. Happily, she had those ruby slippers that took her there. And if you're a frequent business traveler, there are many times I'm sure you wished you had those ruby slippers yourself.

For many of us, business travel is a necessary part of our jobs. Despite all the advances in technology allowing remote connectivity, there are many instances when you must have face-to-face communication. So we drive, fly, take trains and do whatever it takes to get where we need to be, when we need to be there.

The "road warriors" in business are those dedicated professionals who must travel constantly as a major component of the job – CEOs, executives, sales and service personnel, consultants, sports professionals, and many others.

Business travelers almost always put in long days. Consider the typical itinerary: Up before the sun to catch a flight out of town. You arrive at your destination and often have to hit the pavement running to make your meeting or conference schedule. Following a late business dinner, you're ready to collapse. The next morning, it starts all over again. And this process gets even more complicated if it's in another country and across the international dateline.

While it's never easy, there are ways to make life on the road less stressful and exhausting. What follows are some helpful hints and suggestions to help you "ease on down the road" and get the most benefit you can out of every travel experience.

- "Before arriving at the airport, print your boarding pass in advance, from the Internet, even if you plan to check bags," advises Candy Hannemann, former LPGA professional golfer originally from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This guarantees you have a seat and affords you the opportunity to possibly change your seat later.

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- Pack your clothes in plastic bags, the kind you get from the cleaners,” suggests Mike Hansen, a consultant and executive coach from Maryland. “This helps the clothes resist creasing and look fresh when unpacked and hung up.”
- Julius Marcus, a retired corporate vice president at Xerox, notes that a small plastic shoehorn can come in mighty handy. “It makes the shoe routine at the security check point easier on you as well as getting those shoes back on after a long international flight,” he said.
- Tamar Elkeles, the chief learning officer for Qualcomm, from San Diego, suggests having a travel itinerary with all the complete details – driver, confirmation numbers, accommodations, key contacts, etc. “There’s NO such thing as too much detail when you’re on a business trip.”
- Jeff Black, former CEO of Teleflex Corporation, says to bring your own alarm clock. “You should never depend solely on the hotel clock, or wake up service,” he says.
- Make sure that your cell phone (Blackberry and other technologies, too) is set up to work abroad, says Suresh Subramanian, group senior vice president, Telcordia Technologies. “Your U.S. cell does not work in Japan, so make alternate arrangements in advance.”
- Cas Skrzypczak, a board member of JDS Uniphase and RF Micro Devices, recommends that you always keep a couple of packs of Shout Wipes in your brief case. “It’s amazing how they remove spills, spots, and stains.”

As a business traveler myself and having just returned from China, I’d offer a few thoughts: 1) If you will be speaking to an international group, translate some of your opening remarks into the local language – it’s noticed and much appreciated by them. 2) Carry a roll of reinforced nylon tape with you. If anything breaks, or you need to provide a handle to carry a package, that tape will come in handy. 3) Finally, organize your receipts and reconcile your finances each evening, placing them in a dated envelope. This is helpful when it’s time to account for your expenses, especially cash incidentals, such as tips.

Whether you’re a road warrior or not, anything you can do to take the stress out of the business travel of getting there and back can increase your personal productivity and make every trip a meaningful and rewarding experience.

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