

TRAVEL

DECEMBER 1995/JANUARY 1996 \$2.50

HOLIDAY

Winter
Escapes

Jamaica

Mexico

Honolulu

Chile

Quebec

Florence

City for all seasons



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TRAVEL ADVISER

WHAT TO DO IF...

Your plane is delayed

KEEP COOL Weather plays havoc with schedules, and airlines aren't required to compensate delayed passengers. So, stay calm—and be prepared to negotiate. Your angrily demanding “satisfaction” won't impress the airline.

FIND A PHONE Circumvent crowded airport counters by calling your airline's toll-free reservations number, where telephone agents can help.

STAY FOCUSED Airlines may issue vouchers for free meals and phone calls. But concentrate on securing alternative flight arrangements, and pay less attention to getting a freebie.



KNOW THE CODE Under “Rule 240,” an airline employee can transfer your ticket to another carrier so that you may catch the next available flight. It is costly for the airline, so don't be overly optimistic. Explain why you must get to your destination as soon as possible, and then ask to be “Rule 240'd.”

BE PREPARED Reduce your chances of experiencing a delay by choosing a nonstop flight and never booking the last flight of the day.

Five Rules for a Healthy Winter



SAFE & SOUND

During the winter, vacationers either seeking out snowy climes or escaping them to bask in the warm sun should be wary of particular pitfalls. Dr. Bradley Connor, director of Manhattan's Travel Health Services, points out five seasonal health concerns. “A lot of good evidence suggests that everyone—especially travelers in contact with many people over a short period of time—should consider getting a flu shot,” says Connor. “During the winter, when people are carrying viruses in enclosed

spaces, the likelihood of transmission increases.” Now that jets, as a fuel-saving measure, are pumping less fresh air into their cabins, airplanes have become even more virulent breeding grounds for flu. Just waiting in crowded airports increases your risk of catching airborne viruses.

“Some people say you can get a mild case of influenza from flu shots,” says Connor, “but this isn't true. They're safe, effective, and not associated with side effects.”

Flying with a cold A simple winter cold can cause unpleasant complications in an airplane because pressure builds up in the ear canal and sinuses during takeoff and landing, Connor warns.

See a doctor or a pharmacist for a decongestant and nasal spray. Decongestants work best when taken an hour before departure. Use nasal sprays just before the plane begins to take off and descend. Those with severe cases of sinusitis or fluid behind the ear should consider postponing their trip. Decongestants may not help alleviate the former, and the latter can perforate the eardrum when pressure changes.

Block out the sun “Especially when you're coming from a winter climate, your exposure to more-intense ultraviolet rays in sunny destinations can cause a severe burn,” cautions Connor. If you're set on getting a winter tan, you need to become acclimated gradually. Don't forgo using a sunblock with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or more. Connor also recommends a wide-brimmed hat, to shade the face, and sunglasses that guard against ultraviolet

A and B rays. Wear sunscreen under mesh or loose-weave garments. Many common medications—particularly some antibiotics—increase the skin's photosensitivity.

Eat wisely in hot climates “When you flee to the tropics, you'll need plenty of liquids, but be very careful of what you're eating and drinking,” Connor advises. He rules out tap water and even noncarbonated bottled beverages. “Sometimes ‘bottled water’ is simply tap water in a bottle; if a liquid is carbonated and sealed, however, you can usually trust that it's been packaged by the manufacturer.”

You can't be certain that fruit is harmless. Make sure that the skin is intact and that you can peel it with your hands. Stay away from uncooked foods that have been washed, such as salads. The safest meals are freshly cooked and served piping hot; dishes prepared in advance and left out in the air uncovered may be risky to eat as they can become contaminated, especially under the hot sun. If cold food is the only available option, look for dry goods such as bread and crackers or very sugary dishes.

Bundle up against the cold “If you're vacationing in a colder climate, hypothermia is always a risk,” warns Connor. Wear layered clothing, and minimize alcohol intake. Alcohol gives you a false sense of warmth and hinders your body's ability to adjust to a drop in temperature. If you're taking medication for hypertension, heart disease, or a neurological disorder, your prescription drug may make you more susceptible to harmful effects of the cold.—Maureen Clarke