

Your First Business Trip

The odd thing about business travel is to some extent, it is a mixture of what you know the very strange. The business you are going out to do you know how to do. Whether it discussing a new business project, developing a software product or attending a seminar or conference, the business part of your business trip is probably not the hardest part.

But if you are new to business travel, there are some aspects to it that are very different from travel for leisure and ways to prepare for the trip that will make or break whether it goes well or you come home frustrated in your efforts. Just like any business venture, the key word for success in this venture is preparation. Above all, have your business program well organized and ready to use when you get there. If you are giving a presentation, have it finished, the PowerPoint slides prepared and tested and all of your equipment ready to go when you set out. The sheer fact that you are prepared for the work you are going to this new city to do will relieve your tension tremendously.

But preparation doesn't stop just in planning for a successful business effort. Do your homework about the place you are going and how you will handle the trip once you get there. Here are some key things you should think well in advance about to assure your trip goes well.

* Your plane flight. As soon as you know your destination, book that flight. The earlier you nail that down, the more you know you will have a flight and that your choice of seats is assured. This can make business travel by air much less stressful.

* Driving in a new town. If you are going to drive in a new town, be sure you have maps and know how to negotiate the roads. It's a whole different world to drive in Boston compared to driving in Kansas City. If you can avoid driving, make sure your ground transportation is arranged ahead of time.

* Accommodations. Obviously, book your hotel well in advance to assure you will have a room when you get there. Only in situations where you are not sure where you will end up should you put this off. The last thing you want would be to need a room at 11 p.m. and everything in town is booked up.

* Extraordinary needs. If you have medicines or other needs that are going to require special planning, get out ahead of that too. If there are business needs you will require upon your arrival, you can ship things ahead for yourself so that equipment is waiting in your destination office when you arrive.

* Dealing with security. Remember that homeland security at airports is tight and the rules change from time to time. You can usually find the current restrictions and ways the airlines will allow you to travel on the internet. By knowing this in advance, you can avoid a lot of heartache when you get to the airport.

* Money. You don't want to have wads of cash with you when you travel but think ahead about how much cash and other monetary needs you should have. Travel with plenty of credit at your disposal. Emergency situations on the road can be defrayed with good credit or you can find yourself in a real jam without it. If you are traveling overseas, become familiar with the monetary system you will be using there.

* Things you take for granted. Little things mean a lot. If you have creature comforts you need in the hotel room, think about them and pack such things so you can feel as at home as possible. Something as small as your favorite pillow or a scented candle to relax you can make all the difference in your ability to rest and be ready for business the next day.

By doing plenty of good planning, you can assure yourself that you have what you need on the trip and nothing more. This will become more natural as you travel more. But take the time to prepare well and prepare early so as you venture forth on this big adventure, you know you have covered every base before you left home.