

5 Getaway Mistakes You Don't Want to Make



Spur-of-the-moment trips can be a joy — if you avoid a few common pitfalls. ::

BY TROY ANDERSON

FOR SOME TRAVELERS, spontaneity is the elixir of life. And it's easy to see the allure of great destinations: An impromptu long weekend in New York, London, or San Francisco, can be a blast.

But if you're smart, you'll avoid some common quick-trip mistakes that can turn the joy of spontaneity into misery.

If you've only got three or four nights, travel experts say just a bit of research and planning can help make the most of your short break — and still let you revel in some madcap wanderlust.

Just be aware of these five common quick-getaway mistakes:

MISTAKE NO. 1:

Multiple Airline Connections

■ A cheap airline ticket may seem like a pass to paradise, but sometimes the trip to nirvana can be a hellish ride if it goes through several airports.

"If you are not careful, the cheap plane trips will take you through God knows where," says travel agent Mike Cooney, co-owner of Cooney World Adventures. "You'll have three stops, and eight hours later you'll get to your destination."

And that's if you don't miss any connections.

Missed connections have spoiled many a spur-of-the-moment jaunt. Book a nonstop flight if possible.

MISTAKE NO. 2:

Booking a Hotel in the Boondocks

■ When it comes to quick escapes, the key is getting as close to the action as possible. This is especially true in New York City.

"The reason why you want to stay close to the action is because you don't have a lot of time," says travel expert John E. DiScala, founder of JohnnyJet.com. "If you are going to London, you want to be downtown. You don't want to stay out at the airport, trying to save money, because it's going to cost you more and waste your time going back and forth."

MISTAKE NO. 3:

Trying to See the Whole World

■ Instead of rushing to see it all, pick

just a couple of specific places to soak in the "culture and the experience," Cooney says. "It's far better to really home in on two specific areas because whenever we travel and we try to get in too much then we usually don't get to see much of anything."

MISTAKE NO. 4:

Winging the Hotel and Dinner

■ Don't take the risk of waiting until you get to your destination to find a place to stay. Yes, this takes some of the spontaneity out of the trip, but it also ensures that you won't be checking in at a dumpy hotel in an undesirable location. Winging it is also a bad idea if you are interested in high-end dining, although sometimes, a good hotel concierge can get guests a table at a sold-out restaurant, DiScala says.

MISTAKE NO. 5:

Dressing Like the Michelin Man

■ Employ smart layering techniques. This is especially true in places like San Francisco, where a cool ocean breeze can cause a sudden chill.

Long underwear is not exactly the most romantic item to pack for a quick getaway, but it can be the most valuable, says Cooney.

"Silk long johns are literally worth their weight in gold," he says, adding, "You can be down to just silk long johns in temperatures in the 50s easily — and you'll stay warm the entire time." Eddie Bauer sells an excellent pair for \$60. □

