WINTER HOLIDAY TRAVEL SEASON
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"The response to my questions was so quick and helpful! The coordinators were very responsive, and I am very satisfied with all aspects of the service provided by Assist America."

- Amy

Last year, Amy* and her friends decided to spend their Thanksgiving in Italy. A few days before their departure, Amy started experiencing minor headaches but did not want to cancel her long-awaited trip with her friends. She decided to travel abroad after taking a few precautionary measures.

Prior to departure, Amy called her insurance company for pre-trip information and was transferred to Assist America. She wanted to confirm which medications she could bring with her on the trip to Italy and which medications she would be able to find abroad, if the need arose. A medical coordinator explained the services to Amy and helped her find replacements of her current medications and match them to the brands found in Italy.

While in Italy, Amy’s headaches worsened. She called Assist America to help her find a medical facility near Amy’s hotel. Assist America recommended three facilities and contacted her physician back home for her medical records. Assist America made an appointment on Amy’s behalf and shared the location details with her.

After her visit, Amy contacted Assist America to help source her newly prescribed medications. The Assist America coordinator contacted a local pharmacy and Amy was able to retrieve them on her way back to the hotel from an afternoon excursion.
WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER TRAVELING ON THE HOLIDAY

The holiday season is quickly approaching which means everyone is making some sort of travel plans to either visit their friends and family or go to their dream destination. If the upcoming holiday travel season is stressing you out, Assist America, our emergency travel assistance partner, suggests traveling on the actual holiday. You will save money, avoid the holiday season rush, and enjoy some surprising benefits.

1. Cost-Efficient Travel Options
Many travelers leave days before the actual holiday and that raises the price of travel during the holiday season. However, if you were to leave during the day of the holiday, when there are the least number of travelers, you would be able to save time and money. Prices on the actual day of a holiday are often three times less expensive than during the days leading up to the holiday.

2. Cheerful Mood
Holiday season can mean that many people just want to reach their destination and enjoy their time spent with family and friends. This may make many travelers short-tempered and feel rushed to reach their destination. However, during the actual day of the holiday, flight attendants, airport staff, and the fellow passengers are in a nicer and friendlier mood. According to journalist Lilit Marcus from Condé Nast Traveler, “the solidarity of knowing we’re not with our families and that work schedules aren’t the easiest thing to negotiate usually results in kinder, friendlier crew and passengers alike.”

3. Avoid Long Lines
During the day of the holiday, most people enjoy their time indoors which means there are less people on the roads and at airports. According to an article from Insider, people dislike flying on or close to the holidays which means there are less people waiting in line at check-in and security. It is also much easier to travel, take a shared ride, or even go on a road trip as many people celebrate the holiday indoors. While the roads and airports remain packed during the holiday season, CityLab has reported that congestion was the lowest on Christmas Day itself as opposed to the days before and after the holiday.

To avoid long lines, avoid traveling at peak travel times which are Wednesday and Sunday for Thanksgiving weekend. The further away from these days you can travel, the better. If you can leave on Saturday or Monday, you’ll probably enjoy less-crowded airports for your return home.

4. Holiday Meal
Some airlines understand that traveling during the holidays and being away from loved ones can be difficult for passengers. To make passengers feel more at home during the holiday season, some airlines provide holiday-themed meals, movies, and entertainment.

5. Upgrades
Since many travelers prefer to travel a few days before and after the actual holiday, that means many travel accommodations will remain vacant. On Thanksgiving and Christmas day, you may be able to get upgraded, whether it’s scoring a first-class seat or moving to a better hotel suite. The key is to ask politely and, if there is some availability, staff members will be happy to help in the holiday spirit. These are just a few of the reasons why traveling during the winter holidays can be rewarding and relaxing. You’ll go through the airport in minimal time, allowing you to enjoy your Thanksgiving break and swiftly reach your destination. Enjoy this Thanksgiving weekend with your loved ones and we wish you safe travels wherever this holiday season may take you!

Sources: Condé Nast Traveler, CityLab, Insider
The holiday season is one of the best times of the year to travel and explore new cities and countries with your loved ones. However, packing for this season can sometimes be challenging if you need to pack light, but also need all your winter essentials. You may even feel the need to carry an extra check-in bag during the winter season, but there are better options to get around this situation.

Assist America, our emergency travel assistance partner, shares tips to help you stay warm, pack light, and carry the right essentials during your holiday travels.

Before Travel

1. Clothing Essentials

Start with the basic packing list that you usually take with you while traveling such as shirts, pants, and shoes. The next step is to focus on swapping in the winter essentials that are the most important for your vacation which are warmer clothes. For your winter travels, you should plan to bring two pairs of pants, swap a few shirts for two to three sweaters, one pair of winter boots, and about two jackets.

Assist America, our emergency travel assistance partner, offers tips to help you stay warm, pack light, and carry the right essentials during your holiday travels.

During your winter travels, other people are most likely only going to see the outermost layer of clothing such as the jacket and boots. Choose clothing that can be worn multiple times, keeps you warm, and allows perspiration to diffuse out. Since the inner layers of your clothes are going to be hidden, make sure to take items that you are comfortable wearing for long periods of time rather than choosing stylish options.

2. Toiletries

Chilly winter air and the frosty weather can cause dry skin and other skin conditions. Make sure to carry a hydrating chap stick, a skin moisturizer, and sunscreen for your outdoor activities. Other essentials include post-shower moisturizers, saline solution for dry eyes and nasal passageways, and makeup with SPF.

3. Winter Sports Gear

If you’re planning to engage in winter sports or related activities, bring a few things that can easily be packed into your day bag so you can save money on locker rentals. You should invest in travel-friendly crampons if you are planning to walk for an extended period of time during the winter holidays as they can be attached to your normal hiking boots and keep you from slipping and sliding in hard snow.

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During Travel

1. Air Traveling
On the day of your travels, wear the heaviest jacket, winter boots, and snow pants to save some much-needed room in your travel bags. Instead of fitting your bulkiest jacket in your bag, you should try to fit all your other belongings in the carry-on bag. The carry-on luggage will not only stay on the same flight as you so that you can grab-and-go, but you will also save time on collecting your luggage during the holiday rush.

2. Carry a Day Bag
During your winter travels, you will want to take a day bag that can fold down small and will help you store things like extra layers of clothing, extra sets of gloves and socks, phone chargers, snacks, and small trinkets you pick up while exploring. You should also invest in a packable down jacket that can easily be folded away into your day bag.

3. Change Up Your Accessories
Accessories are an easy way to change up any outfit while traveling and are generally small and easy to pack. Some accessories that will keep you warm are hats, gloves, scarves, and long socks.

Packing for the winter holiday season can be challenging. We hope these simple packing tips will help you and your loved ones enjoy a stress-free holiday vacation.

If an emergency arises during the holidays or you require pre-trip information, remember to contact Assist America, our emergency travel assistance partner who is available 24/7 to help you find a qualified doctor near your location, secure prescriptions at a local pharmacy, or help you track down your lost luggage. To talk to an Assist America coordinator, download the Assist America Mobile App on iPhone or Android or call 1-800-872-1414 (toll free) / +1-609-986-1234 (outside of the U.S.).

ASSIST AMERICA IN ACTION

“Daily follow-up and the speed with which our entire return travel plans were accomplished after above mentioned paperwork had been completed was phenomenal. We also appreciate the seamlessness of all travel arrangements provided.” - George

California residents, George and Lisa, like to spend their winter holidays away from home to enjoy the fresh and crisp winter snow. On December 14th, the couple departed on their two-week vacation to St. Moritz, Switzerland where they enjoy skiing, hiking, and other winter activities. Last year however, a skiing excursion led to George injuring his knee and hip. He was rushed to the ER where doctors said he would require a hip replacement surgery for which he would have to postpone his flight back home.

After the surgery, Lisa called Assist America for help. Assist America's medical coordinators began monitoring George's care and contacted the local treating doctor to discuss repatriation plans. The local treating doctor and Assist America Consulting Chief Medical Director decided George needed to stay at the hospital for at least four days following the surgery and would not be permitted to travel.

When George was finally cleared for travel, Assist America arranged and paid the couple’s return to Santa Rosa via first class commercial flight with wheelchair assistance. The coordinator also arranged ground transportation for the couple's transfers to and from both airports.

While this was a frightening situation which occurred away from home, the couple was very thankful for the services they received and look forward to their next holiday trip with no plans to go skiing this time around!

*Names changed for privacy.*