

Car Rental Do's and Don'ts When Traveling

When you travel, it's usually for the sole purpose of relaxing. So, why stress out over details and ruin your long-awaited vacation with worry?

The cost of traveling is a hardship for many, but it is possible to enjoy a wonderful vacation on a budget. Smart travelers will research their options ahead of time to make their trips worthwhile and affordable. They'll check for hotels that offer the best deals, and opt for all-inclusive travel packages in order to save even more money.

One area that travelers often forget to plan, however, is renting a car. Remember that wherever you travel, you're going to need to get from place to place. Transportation fares can quickly add up, until you've spent a fortune on sightseeing alone. For this reason, it's just not practical to rely on shuttle services and taxis to get from place to place. A car rental will offer a much more cost-effective mode of discount vacation travel.

You may think that renting a car can be too expensive, but there are very affordable packages available. You can browse online to find good deals, but beware of scams and hidden charges. There are some important points to consider, ensuring that your "good deal" doesn't end up costing a great deal more than you'd anticipated.

Here are some car rental "Do's and Don'ts" that you should always keep in mind:

* Don't forget to examine the condition of the car.

Before you drive the car away from the rental lot, make sure that both you and the agency representative have checked the vehicle completely, inside and out. Look for any existing scratches or damage, and have the agency make note of these on the rental agreement. Otherwise, you may end up paying a hefty price for damages caused by another driver.

* Do have the company's agent attest to the condition of the car.

Make sure that the car's interior and exterior condition is recorded and noted before signing any contract. If you have a camcorder or camera, use it to examine the car.

* Don't jump at every "good deal" that you find online.

Some people don't take the time to browse several sites and compare deals. Rather, they just grab the first offer given to them without checking for other options. What they fail to realize is that there are many car rental websites online that offer great deals to customers. Check travel websites to find comparison tools that offer all deals on one page. And look for car rental coupons.

* Do compare prices offline as well.

While the Internet is perhaps the best place to find great deals, it is still in your best interest to search for bargains "in person". If you find a suitable offer online, call or visit the agency to personally verify all of the details.

* Do examine the car rental terms.

It's your responsibility to make sure that you have certain options available to you, such as limitless mileage when you're planning a lot of driving. Some car rental agencies will impose a cap on the miles that you can accumulate on the vehicle, and they'll charge an inflated rate for every mile traveled over the allotted number. Similarly, most agencies charge exorbitant rates for fuel. If you return the vehicle with an empty tank, you can pay as much as \$5 per gallon when the tank is refilled. Check the fine print and if this charge will apply to your agreement, be sure to fill the tank before you return the car.

* Do keep it clean

Take the time to clean out the car before you return it. This is not only a simple act of courtesy, but it may reduce the amount that you pay at the end of your agreement. If the car rental agency has to clean your filthy rental car, they may add extra charges to your credit card.

Vacations are meant to be relaxing, and there's no point in subjecting yourself to undue stress and worry. Follow these car rental "Do's and Don'ts" for a truly fun and easy vacation.