

TRAVEL NOTEBOOK

We hope you will find the following travel suggestions helpful. Hopefully, they will make your next trip more comfortable.

First, whether or not you plan to travel abroad in the near future. Now is the time to obtain a passport. A passport is an excellent means of identification,

especially for people who do not drive. When you have your passport, you are always ready to go at a moment's notice.

Try to plan vacations during your destination's off season. Wonderful bargains are to be had then. However, be sure to shop around for the best package. We have found that using a travel agent can save headaches. Sometimes these rates are too good to be true, because they do not include a variety of fees that you, the traveler, will have to pay before leaving your destination. Your travel agent can help you discern the real from the false bargains.

And speaking of travel agents, it is a good idea to develop a working relationship with a reputable travel agent in your area. We would suggest a Black agent, usually he or she will be a member of the Interamerican Travel Agents Society (ITAS). Why a Black travel agent? For a number of reasons, but first and foremost, we need to support our Black businesses and professionals whenever we can in order to help transform our ghettos into pride-filled Black communities.

Although hotels deny it, many seasoned Black travelers have noticed that some hotels seem to assign certain rooms to Blacks. Those are usually the rooms with faulty radiators or air conditioners, broken furniture and bathroom fixtures, etc. Your travel agent spends a good deal of time making on-site inspection of various facilities. A Black travel agent is usually able to direct you away from those hotels that practice this subtle form of discrimination.

Needless to say, whether you use a travel agent or make your travel arrangements on your own, the first thing you want to do *before* unpacking is to inspect the room thoroughly. Anything that is not to your liking, report immediately. And if it is necessary to change rooms, ask the desk clerk for the keys to several rooms to be sure you have what you want. Remember, you are paying for the room and you should be satisfied. As a matter of fact, if every Black traveler responded in this way, it is doubtful that the hotels would continue to foist off on Blacks substandard rooms.

One more point about your hotel room. It is part of a public facility. Although local health departments have codes concerning the way in which hotel bathrooms are to be maintained, the wise traveler personally sanitizes his or her room. It is easy to carry a travel-size bottle of disinfectant and a disposable cloth. In fifteen minutes the bathroom and all washable surfaces in the bedroom can be cleaned. It is a small price to pay for peace of mind and good health.

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