

LET'S GO! TRAVEL

Tips help holiday travelers reach their destination safely

The holiday season brings excesses — but not only of high spirits and good cheer. It also brings a rush of travelers — hurrying and vulnerable.

"This year, fare wars have escalated to the point where lower fares have been offered even on dates that are normally blacked out," said L. William Chiles, president of Hickory Travel Systems, an international network of independent travel agencies.

"This, too, will add to the holiday crush and confusion." This sheer volume means crowded airports, packed planes, delays, lost luggage, and sold-out flights, hotels, and resorts. Distracted holiday

travelers loaded down with gifts are also prime targets for thieves.

To help holiday travel go more smoothly, Hickory Travel Systems offers these practical guidelines:

- Have wrap, will travel. Pack holiday gift wrap in suitcases and wrap presents at your destination. Gift-wrapped packages may be cumbersome to transport and could prompt airport security personnel to ask to see the contents.
- Overstuffed overheads. Travelers who carry on baggage instead of checking it may find on-board space stuffed with gift packages and winter apparel.

Claim overhead-compartment space by boarding early (by choosing a high seat number or as a member of a frequent flyer group).

■ Label Logic. Although airlines require all checked luggage to be labeled, luggage tags may become dislodged. Be sure to also label the inside of suitcases.

4. Seating strategy. Knowing where to sit can contribute to comfort. For more leg room, request bulkhead or exit-row seats. For a smoother ride, choose the more stable positions over the wings — and avoid rear seating.

■ "Poor driver" penalty. Unex-

pected denial of a rental car can mar a holiday trip. Major rental companies now check driving records with departments of motor vehicles. If your record has blemishes, check eligibility ahead of time. If declined a rental, try smaller companies that don't run checks.

■ Free Upgrade. Car rental companies inventory only a limited amount of economy-class sub-compact. If you reserve this category, chances are good of getting a free upgrade.

■ Towel tricks. Prevent toddlers from locking themselves in hotel bathrooms by draping a towel over the door to keep it ajar. Be-

cause all hotel room doors look alike to young children who may not remember or be able to read a room number, tape a child's drawing to the outside of the door to aid identification.

■ Cruise buffer. If you're planning a holiday cruise, it's smart to allow a day or two to unwind at a hotel close to the boat dock. This way, you've built in a hedge

against wintertime flight delays and misdirected luggage.

■ Avoid pay-phone stalkers. Because 27,000 crimes occur at pay phones each year, using them requires special precautions. These include avoiding isolated phone booths or those without lights, facing outward while calling (to watch for intruders), staying alert, and hanging on to belongings while making a call.



Festival singers: The Serendipity Singers, who have been performing since the 1960s, will be featured during the Saturday dinner theater at the Grand Traverse Resort in Acme.

See the lights at Grand Traverse Resort

Feel like adding a northern feel to your holidays?

The Grand Traverse Resort in Acme is offering special North-

woods Festival of Lights weekend packages at \$135 double occupancy, which includes two nights accommodation, dinner theater and

Sunday brunch.

For more information, about the Northwoods Festival weekend package and dinner theater, call the resort at 1-(800) 748-0303.

The resort's Festival of Lights offers an array of holiday displays throughout the resort grounds and lobby. It's one of the biggest displays in the Midwest. There's a fantasy forest with three massive white Pegasus horses, more than 30 hand-made animated woodland creatures and a near life-size polar bear.

As part of the festival, The

Serendipity Singers will perform their upbeat blend of folk, pop and traditional during the festival at the Saturday evening dinner theater through Dec. 17. The dinner theater includes a traditional holiday buffet feast, with all the trimmings.

The Serendipity Singers have been performing since the mid-1960s. They've appeared on television and in all 50 states. Their first hit was the song, "Don't Let the Rain Come Down." They offer a varied repertoire and light touches of humor.

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Ski club trips

Schoolcraft College's Ski Club, EdgeRunner, invites you to join them on their upcoming ski trip to Steamboat Springs, Colorado, Jan. 1-9. The nine day excursion includes transportation, lodging, lift tickets, apres ski parties, powder cat skiing, and other optional side trips. The cost is \$398 per person. Call (313) 462-4422 for information.

Here are some other upcoming trips. The club will go to Blue Mountain in Canada, Feb. 17-19. The cost is \$135 for club members, \$155 for non members. Crazy Daze at Boyne Mountain is March 17-19. The cost is \$155 for members, \$175 for non-members.

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The Four Seasons Inn on the Park isn't just a hotel. It's Toronto's best resort, for your entire family. Adults can discover a great exchange rate during holiday shopping in Toronto or take in the Barnes Exhibit at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Children can enjoy Toronto's world-famous Santa Claus Parade as well as a host of other seasonal activities around the city. And of course our "Inn Kids" program is always popular. So for the best family vacation this season, come to Toronto's best resort.

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