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Buying Travel Insurance: Ten things to know from the US Travel Insurance Association

What do you need to know before purchasing travel insurance? What should you ask yourself? Is travel insurance the same as travel protection? Are there red flags to watch out for when searching for a reliable travel insurance provider?

The experts at the US Travel Insurance Association – whose members represent 90% of the travel insurance industry – offer ten consumer-wise hints to help you in your travel insurance decision.

1. **Know who is underwriting the policy.** Ask for the name of the insurance company underwriting the policy. All legitimate policies must identify the insurance company.
2. **Check out the company. If you are not familiar with the company providing your travel insurance, do a little research.** Visit the company website. Check the credentials of the company's insurer through A.M. Best (www.ambest.com), an international insurance rating agency; or the Better Business Bureau. Also check for membership in the US Travel Insurance Association (www.ustia.org). The Web site carries a list of member companies, each of whom adheres to strict legal and ethical standards.
3. **Buy from a reputable source** such as a travel agent belonging to the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA), or from a reputable cruise line, tour operator, airline, Internet site, insurance broker or directly from the travel insurance provider.
4. **Assess your needs.** Will you need medical protection, financial reimbursement in case you have to cancel your trip or a family member becomes ill, financial reimbursement in case your trip is delayed because of bad weather? Ask yourself what possible scenarios could develop to derail your travel plans.
5. **Know if you have other coverage.** When you travel, don't assume that you have the coverage you need from your credit cards, home owners insurance, airlines, or other sources. While these sources may offer limited coverage for some travel scenarios, only comprehensive travel insurance offers full protection under a single umbrella.
6. **Keep any pre-existing medical conditions in mind.** Many policies will provide coverage for pre-existing medical conditions, provided that the policy is purchased within 10 – 15 days after you book your travel.
7. **Know the difference between "Travel Protection," a travel waiver, and travel insurance:**
 - A Travel Waiver will usually give you a future credit with the same travel supplier for a missed vacation or cruise but will not financially reimburse you.

- “Travel Protection” may not be the same as travel insurance. While the term “Travel Protection” has been used by some unscrupulous companies, many legitimate companies also use it to describe travel insurance.
 - Travel insurance must be underwritten by a legitimate insurance company and is regulated by the state in which it is sold.
8. **Know what the policy includes.** Always do your homework and read the policy carefully so you know what is and is not included. Most companies provide a customer service number for questions and answers, and also provide a grace period for cancellation.
 9. **Travel responsibly.** When traveling, don’t engage in reckless behaviors that may put you and your traveling companions at risk. Certain behaviors can lead to incidents that would invalidate your travel insurance coverage, such as a loss caused by drunk driving or other criminal activities.
 10. **Keep all appropriate paperwork/documentation.** When traveling, keep records and save all receipts in case you have to file a claim for travel delay, medical treatment, lost luggage, or any of other unforeseen situations.

About UStiA

UStiA promotes fairness, integrity and a commitment to excellence in the travel insurance industry. With a mission to educate the public on travel and vacation rental insurance while maintaining high industry standards, UStiA is a non-profit association of insurance carriers and allied businesses involved in the development, administration and marketing of travel insurance and assistance.

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