

Travel Insurance: The Key to a Worry-Free Trip

Travel insurance was designed to make travel a worry-free experience. Emergencies can happen anytime, anywhere — even for a well-prepared traveller. You might have an accident the night before your trip. You might need medical assistance when you're away. You just never know.

Still not sure about buying travel insurance? Here are a few questions to consider:

- How much money would you lose if you had to cancel or interrupt your trip?
- How much would you have to pay for a one-way last minute ticket home?
- If you became ill or injured, would your emergency medical expenses be covered? Would you have to pay these costs up front?
- Would your hotel and meal expenses be paid if you had to stay at your destination longer than expected?
- Who would you call if you were faced with a medical emergency in a foreign country?

Travel Facts*

- In 2002, 75 per cent of Canadians were covered by travel health insurance — a significant gain from the 69 per cent result in 1994.
- However, 25 per cent of Canadians still travelled outside of the country without any kind of travel insurance in 2002.
- Research has shown that the greatest travel risk takers are Canadians between the ages of 18 and 25.
- A one-week stay in a U.S. hospital can cost more than \$10,000.
- The health portion of a travel insurance premium for out of country coverage is considered a medical expense by Revenue Canada and is tax deductible — which is a particular benefit to snowbirds.
- Spending on outbound travel by Canadians is expected to be about \$18.9 billion in 2003.

* Source: Conference Board of Canada

Bright tips for buying travel insurance

Here are some things to keep in mind when shopping for travel insurance:

- Does the plan have a deductible that you have to pay with each claim? If so, make sure you're aware of this clause and are comfortable with the amount you may need to pay.
- Will the company pay your expenses up front — or will you be reimbursed later on? Reimbursement isn't much help if you need expensive surgery and don't have the cash or a credit card on hand.
- What does the policy cover? Would the policy cover the cost of being flown home by air ambulance with a private nurse?
- Does the policy have an emergency phone line you can use to call for help anywhere in the world? If so, are the representatives multilingual?
- Does the policy deny benefits if your medical emergency arises because of a health problem you had when your trip started (this is usually called a "pre-existing condition")?