

## Vacation tips...hmmm...here's what works for me

“*Failing to plan is planning to fail!*” So the most important thing for me is to plan ahead of time:

- Reserving flights, hotels, and cars:
  - I do not enjoy airports and plans – they wear me down. I find I do better if I spend a few extra bucks to reserve direct flights that travel during daylight hours.
  - I try to make sure ahead of time to see if the hotel room will have at least a small refrigerator. They may be able to accommodate this as a special request.
  - Some rooms have microwaves and some do not. Once I stayed in a room without a microwave, but the owners of the guest house let me use theirs.
  - One of the first things I often do on vacation is to go food shopping. So I find it wise to go online or call the hotel and make sure I know ahead of time where the nearest market is. Sometimes the hotel staff will know or they refer me to their concierge service.
  - When traveling in a group, my partner and I once rented our own car. This way I had more flexibility to go to the grocery store and meetings when I needed to. At minimum, I'll make sure I'm signed up as one of the drivers of the car. The downside – I get to be the designated driver. The upside – that's a great service!
- Sponsorship:
  - I try to tell my sponsor at least a couple weeks ahead of time and remind her often that I will soon be traveling
  - We agree on how phone calls will work while I'm away and the rules of how I will commit my food while away.
  - She and help me maintain my sanity if I'm having pre-travel anxiety.
  - (S)he can help me with my plan ahead of time, based on her experience
    - If I don't know what I'm having ahead of time, I commit generics. The *next* time we talk, I tell her what I had. This keeps me accountable.
    - We establish rules that work for *me* when I need to be flexible while away. For example, I have to have at least three hours between meals, and my last meal of the day must be before 10 PM. Early risers may have a minimum early time for eating (not me!).
  - I also try to tell my sponsees ahead of time and remind them often. I try to continue taking my sponsees' calls while away, if feasible and mutually fair. But depending on time differences, I may *strongly* suggest that they get temporary sponsors.
  - If traveling to remote location, I check my cell providers support in that area; I did this once before camping at High Point and was very grateful – I gave my sponsor my food commitment for the entire weekend, before I left because I was not able to reach her for a couple days in a row.
- Phone Calls:
  - I try to find out who's in my cellular network because my plan allows us to talk for free, and then I'm more likely to make program calls while I'm away.
  - I've heard some people announce at meetings that they will be traveling and that they could use phone calls while away.
- Meetings; support from local OAers:
  - I go online and gather and print out a list of meetings ahead of time:
  - I've found that when I'm not familiar to where I'm traveling, the Intergroup websites can be more helpful because it's easier to narrow my list down to the meetings that are in my area. There are usually links from the meetings listed on the WSO website that link to the IG websites, if available.
  - I try to have one or two meetings per day on my printout, so if I need a meeting or want to work in a meeting around my other plans, I have more options.

- I also print out directions to each meeting from a mapping websites and make sure I incorporate any special information from the OA sites such as contact names, phone numbers, meeting types, and location specifics.
- I do better if I call the meeting's contact person ahead of time to verify that the meeting still exists. I once went all the way to a meeting to find out there *was* no meeting! Fortunately I was able to get to another meeting nearby.
- I once asked one of the contact person if I could call her for support if I needed to – it's good to have someone local available, if needed.
- Service
  - I often sign up to lead a meeting for a date close to when I'll be returning from vacation
  - While on vacation, and especially while moving through a difficult time, I think about the experience, strength, and hope I am gaining and will be able to share when I return
  - At newcomer meetings, I share what tools I used to travel successfully.
- Other Tools for Abstinence – making a list *ahead of time* helps me feel less stressed when packing later:
  - Cup and scale and perhaps a can opener if needed
  - A small, nylon, insulated cooler, Tupperware, and perhaps freezer packs to go in the cooler
  - A pen, my Food Journal and perhaps an extra journal for other writings
  - Any special food items that I need and may be unavailable at my destination – check the rules – one may not be able to pack certain foods on all flights!
  - A watch so I know when to eat
  - Cell phone, charger, and headset – converters so I can plug them in when abroad
  - Phone number lists with checks next to those within my cellular network (freebies)
  - Meeting lists, directions, and contact information
  - Literature – I *love* reading the stories in the Big Book while on vacation because I don't read them in the meetings I attend
- I check the rules *ahead of time* to find out what I can and cannot bring on the plane
  - the security rules are always changing and can be different from airport to airport and for international flights
  - You may not be able to pack gel-like food, including yogurt.
  - You may not be able to bring liquids from outside of the airport onto the plane.
  - Even if they say a metal fork and non-serrated knife is allowed, I've learned not to bother trying to take these items on the plane with me – *it's not worth it!* Now I cut up my food ahead of time or just deal with plastic cutlery and bring a spare set for when the fork or knife break – heck, it forces me to eat slower.
  - I've tried putting a metal fork and non-serrated knife in my stowed luggage. Keep in mind that your bag *will* be searched and any locks on your bags may be cut off
  - I pack anything essential to my program in my carryon in case my bags get lost. I pack program literature to read, if I feel well enough to read on the plane.
- I love pages 100 and 103 of the Big Book. They give me a permission to have a life and to enjoy it with freedom! “***Assuming we are spiritually fit*** [emphasis added], *we can do all sorts of things* [compulsive eaters] *are not supposed to do.*” “...*any scheme of combating* [compulsive overeating] *which proposes to shield the sick man from temptation is doomed to failure.*”

### *Surviving the airport and plane ride:*

- I never eat the airport food or the food offered on the plane. I pack my *own* food. It's cheaper, better, abstinent, and there are no surprises.
- As one of my carryon items, I pack my food in Tupperware in a small nylon insulated cooler. It's convenient and I can wash the Tupperware later and use the cooler for day trips while at my destination.
- I now make sure to carry a watch on the phone instead of relying on my cell phone. I found that my cell phone automatically adjusted whenever I crossed time zones, and this made it difficult to know when to eat. One is not usually allowed to turn on his phone in the plane anyway! Oops!

### *At the destination:*

- I try to buy foods that don't need refrigeration &/or cooking. For *me*, things that worked for *my* plan are:
  - Cold cuts and cheese, even for breakfast
  - Evaporated or Dried Milk (Don't cheat! Water must be diluted to restore it to the equivalence amount of regular milk)
  - Nuts
  - Whole grain breads and dry cereals
  - Fruit and fresh vegetables that don't need to be refrigerated
  - A small bottle of olive oil
  - Canned tuna
- I always a meal with me if going out on a day trip. Not everyone I travel with eats three meals a day at restaurants that work for me and at times that work for me. Although I try to make my needs know, I also make sure I'm prepared and have a meal handy in case I need (portions of) it.
- Going to a meeting while on vacation is always a great experience, even if I don't think I *need* a meeting. Since I'm generally more relaxed on vacation, I'm more open to having a spiritual experience. And the locals are generally excited to have visitors.

### *Traveling Internationally:*

- I exchanged some money ahead of time and made sure my ATM card and credit card would work overseas. This way I felt secure that after landing, I could get the food I needed when I needed it.
- Customs does not allow certain foods to be transported between countries. They did question me on the way back, but fortunately I did not have anything that was problematic.
- They REALLY DO have smaller portions in other countries! And tiny cups of coffee too! Prepare for this when eating out.
- In Italy, I found it difficult to find whole grains that worked for me. I bought my own at the local markets and cooked them in the apartment where I was staying.
- I found it difficult to learn Italian before I left. Most people in the cities speak at least a little English and are very friendly. It was difficult to communicate with some people and I'm glad I traveled with people who new more English than I did. Either way, I was able to get by and get the food I needed at the local markets...I took four years of Spanish in high school – next time it's Barcelona!
- I found the time shift was difficult, even with planning ahead. On the way to Italy I lost six hours so my plan included skipping one meal. On the way back, gaining 6 hours, I *spaced out* my three meals, because I couldn't see justifying a fourth meal for myself. I was hungry! I'm not sure if the way I did it was the best way, so next time I'll talk more with my sponsor about how to better make this work.
- I brought a watch on the flight so I could what time to eat. I usually use my cell phone as my watch, but I wasn't allowed to turn it on in the plane. Also, I found out that my cell phone automatically adjusts when I cross a time zone boundary – this can be VERY confusing!
- I did not check ahead of time to see if my cell phone plan would work internationally. A travel companion called his company to get international service for the weeks he would be abroad. I ordered a temporary cell phone that would work in Italy. It was expensive – the nickels and dimes add up quickly. But I am very glad I was able to maintain contact with my sponsors. My abstinence is worth it.
- I brought several different power converters and could have packed lighter by researching exactly which one would work in Italy. But I find that I can never over-plan. I was able to keep my cell phone charged.