

# Come To Order®

...simplifying lives one space at a time

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## What are you planning for your summer vacation?

By Kathy Jenkins, CPO® CFMC®

According to the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA), travel and tourism generates approximately \$1.8 trillion in economic activity in the U.S. every year. That equates to \$4.9 billion a day or \$204 million an hour (WOW, am I ever in the wrong business!).

So if you are like the majority of Americans who are planning to spend your hard earned dollars on a summer vacation, know that planning is the key to a stress-free and enjoyable vacation. Start with the basics – who, what where, when and why – and keep all of the information and associated papers tucked safely in your vacation folder.

Who – The latest American Express Spending & Saving Tracker shows that nearly 70 percent of those with travel plans say they'll travel with their immediate families, up from 45 percent in 2010. Parents, are you breaking out in a sweat just thinking about it? It is a known fact that the level of stress during the trip is in direct proportion to the quality of planning done before ever pulling out of the driveway.

To start off your vacation right create a travel kit for each child filled with things that will keep the idle minds and hands busy. Fill it with a pad of paper and an activity book, some colored pencils or crayons, stickers, pipe cleaners, small toys or dolls, Colorforms, books, and games. It is always handy too to bring favorite movies to play if the car trip is longer than 3 hours. Plan on visiting the Dollar Store and stock up on cheap "surprises" that you can pull out "in case of emergency". And don't forget the snacks; food always calms the savage beast.

What - start your list now of what to bring. Plan to pack at least one outfit for everyday of your vacation. If you mix and match clothing you can get away with taking fewer clothes and still wear something different each day. Stick with the essentials when it comes to toiletries and other items. Over packing is a waste of time and space. To get started visit <http://travelwithkids.about.com/od/packinglists/> or do a Google search on "vacation packing lists" to find more resources.

Where – make sure you have an accurate map and directions to your destination. And knowing your travel time if everything goes according to plan is essential for good planning. If you are traveling by car, plan for stops along the way. Attitudes will stay positive if everyone is given a chance to stretch their legs. If traveling by plane or train, ensure that you not only have a confirmed reservation, but that you also have a seat assignment. Check with your hotel before you leave to make sure you fully understand their check-in and late arrival policy.

When – The American Express Spending & Saving Tracker finds that among those who are planning to take summer vacations with their families, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) will take one or more weeklong trips this summer. Whether it is a long weekend or a week or more of fun in the sun, there are still some things that you need to plan for while you are away. Stop your mail and paper or ask a trusted neighbor or friend to collect it while you are away. Nothing shouts "no one is home" louder than a pile of newspapers or an overflowing mailbox. Invest in timers for

lights and the stereo so there is the appearance that someone is at home. And make sure that someone knows how to reach you in the event of an emergency.

Why – Take time to really think about why you are taking this vacation. Is it to sightsee, relax, or visit with friends or relatives? Setting your expectations before you ever head out the door will help you put things in perspective when things don't go quite as you had planned. Anticipate that something may not go exactly as you imaged, but commit to being flexible so that the trip does not turn out to be a total bust.

While planning might not be the first thing you associate with fun, it is the one thing that will make the difference between a vacation like the Griswold's (remember National Lampoon's Vacation with Chevy Chase...yes, now you remember!) and the best vacation you ever had.

### **About the Author**

As a Certified Professional Organizer and Certified Family Manager coach, Kathy Jenkins can help you run a more organized, efficient, and happy household and raise happy, healthy, responsible, and well-mannered children! Visit <http://www.cometoorderva.com> to learn more about her professional organizing services and one-on-one family manager coaching sessions. You can also follow her tips, advice, and recommendations by liking Come To Order on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/cometoorder>

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