



Travel Tips cont.
by Alan Howard

Upgrades

Whether it is an airline or a hotel getting an upgrade is a wonderful perk to your holiday.

Upgrades on airlines are not as easy to obtain as they once were but are still possible. The most important factor is to make sure you are a member of their loyalty program. Most airlines do not give upgrades to customers who are not members. These programs are free to join so do take the time to become a member. Also, if you have a premium credit card which is attached to the airline this also helps. The most important thing to remember is never to ask the agent for an upgrade as this will most likely annoy the agent; as you can imagine they are dealing with frequent flyers who are very demanding and entitled to upgrades. If you are traveling for a special occasion such as a honeymoon, anniversary do let both the check-in agent and the gate agent know. This often helps when they have to choose who to upgrade. When you are at the gate look around at the type of people are traveling. If you notice a lot of families mention to the gate agent that you do not mind giving up your seat so families can sit together. This really assists the agent when they are trying to juggle seats and they often show their appreciation with an upgrade. One of the major factors is also the way you are dressed. The better dressed the better the chance of an upgrade!

Upgrades at hotels are much easier to obtain then on the airlines. This is one time you do ask for upgrade. Again one of the major factors is making sure you are a member of their loyalty program. Check in time is very important. Time your arrival. Most hotel guests check out between 12 and 2pm. Business travelers tend to check-in around 5pm and after. Time your check in between 3 and 5pm so the good rooms are still available. If you can't make it between these times call the hotel and inquire about your room type. Usually you can get the hotel to block a nice room before your arrival.

Think competitively. Call reservations managers at two competing hotels; explain that you're trying to decide which hotel will offer better value and let a bidding war ensue. This can reap inexpensive rooms and a nice upgrade.

If you stay at a property more than once make sure to write a letter to the manager about your stay and then the next time you check in you most likely will get an upgrade.

Also, if by chance the room you are given is not up to the normal standards of the hotel then do complain to the manager and suggest they upgrade you for not meeting their standards.

In my next column I will explore alternatives to air travel.