

## Travel Insurance: Are You Covered?

With the summer season approaching, you may be thinking about ideas for vacations and travel. Before you make your final vacation plans, you may want to consider protecting your “investment” by purchasing travel insurance.

Vacations can sometimes cost thousands of dollars, so travel experts have long recommended that travelers consider obtaining proper travel insurance protection. It pays to do a little homework first. In some instances, you may already be covered when you book your trip using your credit card, or by your homeowners policy or medical insurance.

When investigating travel insurance, be aware that there are four major types:

**1. Trip Cancellation Insurance:** reimburses you if the cruise line or tour operator goes out of business. Depending on the policy, it may also provide coverage if you have to cancel the trip due to illness, a death in the family or other calamity listed on the policy.

In addition, if you or another family member should become seriously ill or injured during the trip, most policies would reimburse you for the unused portion of the vacation. The cost could run anywhere from 5 to 7 percent of the cost of the vacation package.

Trip cancellation insurance is very different from the cancellation waiver that many cruise and tour operators offer. Waivers are relatively inexpensive, costing from \$40 to \$60, and they provide coverage if you have to cancel the trip, but they have many restrictions. A waiver is not insurance, and they are not regulated by the state departments of insurance.

**2. Baggage Insurance and Personal Effects Coverage:** covers you if your personal belongings are lost, stolen or damaged during the trip. Before buying this type of coverage, check to see how much coverage you may already have, either through the airline or trip operator, or through your own homeowners policy. Homeowners or rental policies provide off-premises coverage.

**3. Emergency Medical Assistance:** Provides insurance and medical assistance for travelers. This might be something to consider if you are heading to a remote location. Before purchasing this, however, check with your own health insurance company to see what type of coverage they provide for travelers. You might also want to ask if they will fly you home or to some other country with first-rate medical care.

**4. Accidental Death Insurance:** provides a variety of coverages if you or a family member should die on the trip. Generally, if you have a good life insurance plan, this could be duplicate insurance.

In any case, the best words of advice are to read any policy carefully before purchasing it to make sure it gives you the coverage you want. Some policies, for instance, may not provide protection should there be a riot or civil war that causes your trip to be canceled or altered.

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