

OK, we're out of those tiny little soaps and the small bottles of shampoo we collected on last year's vacation... so that means it's time to plan for the upcoming year. Hotel reservations, car trips/rentals (both with **AARP** at check-in) and one more thing that we often don't remember until the day we leave.....*medications* and what we can do to stay *healthy* while away from home. Will you need any vaccinations where you're going? You can easily check that by visiting Centers for Disease Control on the computer at www.cdc.gov/travel. And don't wait till the last minute to check.....some must be taken 3-5 weeks before leaving. Your daily medications should be in your "carry-on" bag...not your suitcase...and TSA wants you to put them in their original bottles....but if you just put all the morning meds in one big original bottle with your name on it and mark it **AM**....and the evening meds in a bottle marked **PM**.....TSA doesn't care and they go right thru their scan. Depending on the countries you're going to, your hometown medical care like *Medicare* or *Tricare* probably will **not be valid** at hospitals or local doctor offices.....Visa, MasterCard and American Express **can be used** to pay for those charges (just know the limits for those cards). If you are in an accident that requires that medical treatment, if someone else is to blame for the accident, contact police and those countries with socialized medicine will cover the bill(s), but be sure the police notify the hospital of that fact.

Some other "cautions" we often don't think of...door handles on the plane when going to the bathroom....tray tables at your seat. jet-lag for the first day or two (don't plan a lot of activity the first day and get to bed early that night). Purses and shoulder bags should NOT have all your earthly possessions in them...lighten up to preclude that sore shoulder 3-4 days later....and **you do have a listing of your medications (and your spouses)** in your wallet just as your spouse has a listing of **yours and hers in her purse**.

Now that we're in the 21st century, no one carries a lot of cash anymore....your credit card at the ATM removes that danger. And remember, always use your **Credit card from your Credit Union** at the ATM.....a credit union will only charge you 1% foreign exchange fee for the cash you get from the ATM....bank cards for Visa, M/C, etc will charge you 3-4%. If for some reason you do have a lot of cash with you and you don't plan to carry it with you every day...**DO NOT put it in that small safe in your hotel room**...leave it at the check-in counter down in the lobby....there are many people who know the combination to your room safe! You can also put the "*don't enter*"(*bother*) sign on the doorknob after the maid has cleaned your room.....then, no one will come into your room when you're gone...yes, it's been known to happen. Many of the high-price hotels do have "security cameras in hallways on your floor...or leave the TV on when you leave the hotel which tells people that "there is someone in that room"....good idea to leave the TV on all night long too – makes a great "night-light" in a strange bedroom, or certainly leave the bathroom light on when going to sleep.

And *most important*, you are ready to stock-up on those little soaps and shampoo bottles again. It's gonna be a **great holiday.....Enjoy!**

Submitted by AGCM Moon Mullen USN RET