

QUICK POLL

What sort of date have you taken to a wedding?

- A friend who you wanted to get 'closer' to
- A blind date, set up by one of your friends
- A hired escort

VOTE

Heading out on your first trip alone with someone new? Before you leave, make sure you're prepared for these five scenarios that could put a serious dent in your downtime together.

By Michele Herrmann

A couple's first vacation together is both a new experience and an eye-opener. Any trip dilemma can often bring out the best (or the worst) in someone, which offers valuable insight into how he or she reacts to the unexpected.

"No matter how much you look forward to spending quality time with someone, traveling can be stressful," says **Nicole Hockin**, an industry travel expert and blogger from Denver, CO. With proper planning, though, lovebirds can lessen their chances of facing five common travel calamities — and if you do encounter one of these disasters, here are addition tips on how to cope:

Travel dilemma #1: Delayed flights

If bad weather or bizarre circumstances change your flight pattern, remain calm. Before you fly, compile a list of numbers for your hotel, airline, and rental car agency, advises Hockin, so you contact them quickly to make new arrangements. If you're stuck at the airport, split up so you can better explore what options are available individually.

How to handle it: Nancy Yeomans, a travel consultant in Newburyport, MA, advises having one person call the airline's customer service number, while the other speaks with employees working behind the counter. "Take whatever flights they can offer as soon as possible." —Nancy Yeomans. Stressed in a plane that's not your final destination? See it as

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Your sense of adventure is going to help you enormously.



possible, urges reomans. Stranded in a place that's not your final destination? See it as a trip extension and try to embrace it. "Your sense of adventure is going to help you enormously," explains [April Masini](#), a relationship and dating expert in Naples, FL. Or consider buying an airport lounge pass, suggests Masini, as their amenities can "make your delayed wait very comfortable."

Travel dilemma #2: Lost luggage

Maggie Parker, a New York City-based writer and actress, planned a vacation for herself and her then-boyfriend to visit Turks and Caicos in 2007. Upon their arrival, the couple discovered that their checked bags had gone missing. For three long, luggage-free days, the couple stayed in constant communication by phoning their airline representative twice a day to check on the status of their missing bags... but they didn't let it ruin their trip. "As soon as we left the hotel room, we left the issue behind," Parker says. The couple bought necessities, saving their receipts to submit to the airline in question for reimbursement later.

How to handle it: Before you go, Hockin suggests taking pictures of your bags and luggage tags to serve as visual IDs. Also, put items like contact lenses and cameras in your carry-on bag. If your luggage does go missing, reference your lost bag claim number when speaking with the airline reps and in all written and electronic correspondence. Keep emails brief and to the point, and be sure to include all pertinent information, such as dates and flight numbers. And be nice! "It doesn't do any good to yell at the people who can actually help you track down your bags," warns Hockin.

Travel dilemma #3: Missing hotel reservations

It's nerve-wracking to learn the front desk can't find your hotel reservation. Anne Panek, a marketing manager in Chicago, faced this mishap during a stay with her ex near San

I always bring extra medications with me.

Francisco's Chinatown region nine years ago. He'd booked their online reservation through a third-party vendor, but neither side could locate the computer records needed to verify it. After printing out their paperwork at an Internet café, the couple got their room keys. While heading upstairs, they staged a few peeved-looking photos to snap as a stress reliever. "We had to

keep reminding ourselves that this was a vacation, and that this was just a temporary nuisance," remembers Panek.

How to handle it: Along with having a printed copy of your confirmation on hand, Hockin advises calling the hotel at least 48 hours before your departure to verify everything's still correct. That way, if the place you've chosen happens to be overbooked, the hotel's staff should be responsible for helping you find other accommodations. If you used an outside vendor or third-party service for your booking, contact them as well.

Travel dilemma #4: Stolen wallet/passport (or other important valuables)

Nothing is more frightening than having your handbag or wallet stolen while traveling. In the U.S., go to the local police to file a report if a theft occurs and close your credit and debit cards quickly; if your items don't turn up, you will have grounds for starting insurance claims, says Jen Miner, a writer in Los Angeles and co-founder of [The Vacation Gals](#). During one Las Vegas stay, Miner recalls being distracted by a person bumping into her, only to later discover that her BlackBerry had been lifted from her pocket. "When you're in a heavily trafficked area that notoriously deals with the shadier side of human activity, stay on your guard!" Miner warns. (For your smartphone's safety, apps such as

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Lookout can lock up and wipe data off your iPhone or Android mobile device.)

How to handle it: First, avoid looking like a target: leave your best jewelry at home. Discuss beforehand with your traveling companion how to best safeguard your cash, such as wearing a hidden money belt. Before leaving the U.S., be sure to email yourself copies of your passport and/or driver's license and credit cards as a PDF file for easy access; you can also leave photocopies with someone at home whom you trust in case disaster strikes, and be sure your traveling companion does the same. If you're traveling overseas, you can also register with the U.S. Department of State's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#), which will then send you important updates about the country you'll both be visiting, including travel warnings. If you end up lost once you've arrived at your travel destination overseas, step inside a restaurant to pull out a map or seek directions from someone local, if possible. (This should reduce your chances of being targeted by pickpockets who prey on tourists.) And if thieves do manage to grab your passport — or other valuable documents you'll need to get yourselves back home again — Hockin advises contacting the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance in getting the necessary paperwork started immediately.

Travel dilemma #5: Sudden illness/injury while traveling abroad

When Lori Eaton, an editor, was a student traveling by train through Europe with her then-boyfriend, Stephen, she came down with a terrible fever just two days into their trip. Luckily, when they'd stopped in Valencia on the coast of Spain, she spoke enough Spanish to describe her symptoms to a pharmacist and get the antibiotics she needed to recover. Now, Eaton says, "I *always* bring extra medications with me — including copies of my prescriptions."

How to handle it: Any sudden illness or injury can evoke concerns about getting proper medical care in unfamiliar territory. That's why it's best to learn what overseas services your health insurance provider will cover beforehand, says Hockin. If you have a pre-existing condition, carry a letter from your attending physician that describes this issue along with any prescribed medications, including their generic names. Leave required prescriptions in their original containers and check with your destination's embassy to make sure they aren't classified as illegal narcotics in that country. If you need help, a U.S. consular officer can assist you in locating appropriate medical services and informing loved ones. And remember: It's your responsibility to pay for expenses, says Hockin.

Michele Herrmann is a Connecticut writer and editor whose byline has appeared in The Lost Girls and The Daily Muse blogs online. Though now she travels solo or with friends, memories of trips with her ex-boyfriends mostly have been pleasant.

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