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Travels With Poise

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Travel With Poise

Mary Ann Hakes offers tips on train and plane etiquette for vacation travelers.

There is more to traveling than tipping. Wartime catch-as-catch-can travel didn't allow much room for planning. And planning is one-third the fun. The other two-thirds are the trip itself and the memory of it. The planning involves how to get there, what to wear and what to pack.

While traveling conditions are easing, porters and taxis are still scarce. Wartime toting of heavy bags to and from college has taught us to travel lightly. The tricks college women have picked up are those used by professional women, who rarely take more than one piece of luggage. If the seasoned traveler takes more than one bag, the second one is a vanity case for her overnight trips. There is an extra incentive for light packing if she flies. On airplanes any weight over 40 pounds is charged in proportion to the mileage.

Traveling by bus or day coach simply is a case of buying a ticket and climbing aboard. Again the war has taught travelers to purchase that ticket in advance to avoid the crowd. Also the ticket is needed for checking luggage. If the trip cannot be made on a through train, it is a good idea to check luggage on an earlier train.

Search for Car Number

In the larger stations the traveler must look for her car number. If in doubt, the nearest porter will tell her. In Ames, there usually are only two entrances, one for coach passengers and one for first class. In either case, she gives the porter her berth or seat number. The person with the lower berth ticket has first claim on the seat facing forward.

Pressing the button will bring the porter if she wants a table for writing or for cards. However, it is courteous to ask the person who shares the seat if the table will bother him. Being equally courteous, he should agree to the table. The same procedure takes place when one of the persons wants the berth made. If one of them does not wish to retire when the berth is ready, the porter will find her another seat, or she may sit in the lounge or observation car.

Dressing Room Technique

It is the custom for travelers to carry their toilet articles in separate bags or small cases in their suitcases. A porter will carry a large piece of luggage to the dressing room, but a small case is easier to handle.

If the luggage is large, the porter will answer a ring to take it. If she has an upper, she will have to ring for the porter and his ladder, too. She stays in the dressing room until the porter is putting up the ladder. The porter will wake travelers at any hour.

Dining on the Train

Both Pullman and day coach passengers are served in the diner. The etiquette of the dining car is essentially the same as that for a hotel dining room. The head waiter will seat the guest and give her a menu. Here trains differ. Some waiters will leave an order sheet for the diner to write her own order. On other trains, the waiter takes the order. In either case, once a choice is made, she sticks to it.

Even though mistakes are seldom made on checks, it is wise to look over the bill before paying it. Any mistake can be cleared up with the waiter. The tip is placed on the tray or table. Tipping on the train diners is the same as in hotels, 10 cents for any bill below a dollar and 10 percent of any bill over that. If the check is $1.05, the tip still is 15 cents. A 20 cent tip accompanies a $1.55 check. If the service has been especially good or poor, the tip can be increased or omitted.

If the conductor takes the traveler's ticket, he will give her a claim check. If he has not returned the ticket as she nears her destination, she can ask the porter to check on it. Later if she accepts the porter's offer to brush her off, she may tip him then. Otherwise, she may hand it to him as she steps off the train.

Ten cents is enough for very short trips. However, if she has had special services, she should tip accordingly. An overnight trip means a minimum of 25 cents.

Travel by Air

Plane reservations must be made early. Taxi service to the field is arranged by the larger airlines for a standard fare. All luggage and parcels are checked at the desk when the tickets are taken.

The stewardess will show novice flyers how to fasten their safety belts. The stewardess will bring around trays at meal time. As a rule, the stewardess or other plane attendant is not tipped.

No matter how many tips on traveling we may know, something unexpected may pop up. That's the time to use our own common sense and handle the situation as inconspicuously as possible.