

Travel in Comfort with your Travel Counsellor Security Blanket

Steve Gillick CTM, President and C.O.O.

The Canadian Institute of Travel Counsellors

Do you like to travel? Do you do it because you have to or because you love it? Some people cringe, some whinge and some binge. If you are a little shaky about travelling with all that the media thrusts upon you everyday, perhaps the following options that your travel counsellor can suggest, will give you peace of mind and a chance to still fulfill your travel dream.

Travel counsellors know that travellers come in all shapes and sizes. They know that some people cringe at the very thought of travel. They also know that others wholeheartedly embrace the challenge of discovery, activity, education and adventure. No matter which category of traveller you fall under, you need to feel comfortable and safe. A Certified Travel Counsellor is the perfect resource to provide you with sound advice and, if you will, a security blanket for your travels. Here are some ideas to ponder:

Discover Canada. If troubles around the world are a concern, then why not stay close to home? Just think of all the advantages: It is relatively safe, there are an amazing number of activities, travel counsellors can offer unique ideas for singles, couples, families, seniors, special interest travel, and both active and passive vacations. In Canada you have familiarity with the language and the currency and you need no special travel documentation. Just like a far-flung destination, a Certified Travel Counsellor (CTC) can make all the arrangements for you, from flight to train to motorcoach to car rentals; from a variety of accommodations to evening theatre and special event tickets, to package and customized tours.

Areas within your Comfort Sphere. So you've travelled the depths and breadths of Canada and you really did want to venture further. In times of trouble, many tour operators and cruise lines will adjust their itineraries to take advantage of destinations that are relatively safer. For Canadians this may include the Caribbean, Mexico, Alaska and the Pacific. A Certified Travel Counsellor talks to you about your needs, your concerns and then is able to recommend options for you to consider.

Cancellation policies: When you book your travel, ask your Certified Travel Counsellor about the airline's cancellation policies. There may be an option to upgrade to the next ticket class to ensure that the ticket is refundable. If "something happens" and you have a non-refundable ticket, will the airline allow you some flexibility? Will the cruise line? Remember that this is information a trained travel professional can provide. If you book on your own—you are left to your own resources to find answers to these questions.

Is it Safe? No one can guarantee safety but a trained travel professional can provide you with the proper background information to allow you to satisfy your own comfort requirements. Travel counsellors are up-to-date on government advisories and safety warnings. They know that if you choose to go to a destination for which an advisory has been issued, not only could you be in an unsafe environment but chances are, your travel insurance will not be valid. If you book a destination and then the government issues an

advisory, your travel counsellor will contact you to review your options. If you go to a destination and find that troubles occur, your travel agent can assist you--half way around the world--in seeking assistance. In other words, when you book with a certified travel counsellor--you are not left on your own to figure out how to salvage your vacation or return home, should something unexpected happen.

Realistic Expectations. For those who are apprehensive about travel in this day and age of increased security checks, more detailed information requirements on immigration forms and long, long line-ups, your security blanket is your Certified Travel Counsellor. They can walk you through the airport procedure; tell you exactly what will happen, what kind of questions you will be asked, what kind of items you should leave in your checked baggage and the number and weight of bags you are allowed to take on board. In other words, they will make sure you arrive prepared. By knowing what to expect, you will arrive on time and experience minimal stress. When US immigration screening at Pearson airport in Toronto can take from 15 minutes-to 2 hours, you can avoid a lot of frustration by having the advice of a travel expert on your side.

The Sixth Sense—not just a movie. When all is said and done, the traveller must ultimately make the decision whether to travel or not. If you get a nagging feeling about taking that overseas or cross-border family vacation, then listen to that little voice in your head and alter your plans until you feel 100% comfortable. The joy of travel is based on discovery, education, and doing something different, energizing and stress-free. If one of these components is not in place, then your entire trip could be jeopardized. Play it safe...talk to a Certified Travel Counsellor today about your ideas, your concerns and they will 'counsel' you about realistic options. This is their full time professional occupation. When you spend a lot of time and energy on your travel dreams, it is nice to have them wrapped in a security blanket--that is--good advice from a Certified Travel Counsellor!

A full listing of Canada's Top Travel Professionals can be found at www.citc.ca/en/directory or by contacting CITC at info@citc.ca; 1-800-589-5776; 416-484-4450.

Incorporated in 1968, the vision of the **Canadian Institute of Travel Counsellors** is to lead the Canadian travel industry to be the most skilled and professional work force in the world, and to ensure that the CTC (Certified Travel Counsellor)/ CTM (Certified Travel Manager) designations are recognized, accepted and valued by the travel industry and consumers as the ultimate achievement in professionalism. Information on membership, certification, educational programs and publications is available at www.citc.ca

CITC: Your Passport to Success