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Our Exclusive Newsletter for Individuals

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International Travel Tips

If you are retired or close to retirement now is the perfect time to hop on a plane and see the world. There are a lot of moving parts when it comes to taking an international trip. However, if you plan it right and know what you're getting into it can be a transformational experience. Exploring a new culture means trying new foods, experiencing new music, and seeing things that you've only read about. In order to help make your trip as smooth as possible here are some tips for preparing for your trip, traveling, and ways to make your destination as enjoyable as possible.

BEFORE YOU TRAVEL ABROAD

Whether you decide to take a pre-planned and tightly scheduled group trip or a by-the-seat-of-your-pants solo adventure, research is key. Check out websites like Lonely Planet or Frommer's to get an idea of what your destination will be like. They offer advice on things to do and where to stay as well as how safe your destination is for foreign travelers. If you know someone who has traveled to your choice location, don't hesitate to pick their brain about what to expect. The more you know the more fun you'll have when you arrive. It's also important to know what travel papers you'll need. While many countries allow Americans to travel between borders with only their passports, it's crucial to know whether or not you'll need a travel visa once you plane lands. Some countries, like Vietnam, will allow you to obtain this document at the airport, but other countries require a lengthy and relatively costly vetting process to cross their border.

Mikes Notes



October 15 begins open enrollment for Medicare 2020. Here are some tips to better navigate you through this process. As always we thank you for your business and questions we receive everyday.

TIPS FOR CONSUMERS FOR 2020 MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT

- 1) Make sure you review your ANOC (annual notice of change) for your Part D drug Plan & Your Medicare Advantage Plan. This Details the changes in our plan for the coming year, you should receive by Oct each year from your carrier. See if you can improve your benefits for the new year. Also you can see if any of Your Prescriptions have been Moved to a Higher Tier Level (more cost) on the formulary, This will help you plan your costs for the new year.
- 2) Be Aware of the Enrollment Periods and Dates, AEP, Oct 15th thru Dec 7th (this is where you can change your Medicare or Part D Plan for the new year) The OEP, runs Jan 1st Thru March 31st, (you can make one Change during this period and change one time to a different Advantage plan for year). The ADP, Jan 1st thru Feb 14th (the annual Disenrollment period, You can go back to Original Medicare & get a part D plan, & a supplement Plan, if you Qualify)
- 3) On Medicare Advantage Plans, be sure you review the New Provider List for the coming year, To make sure your Doctor still takes your Plan. Note: you can call your Doctor's office to verify if he will be taking your Plan for the New Year.
- 4) Make sure you check to see if your Prescriptions are covered in your plan- Go to <https://bit.ly/2lBhoZ4> to make sure your current plan will cover your Prescriptions, and to be sure the Formulary has not changed. (you can also go to [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov), and check your drugs)
- 5) Check with your Pharmacy to make sure they are a Preferred Provider with your current plan. The Preferred Pharmacy will ensure you get the best prices, So you want to be sure your pharmacy is a preferred provider with your Part D or Advantage Plan.
- 6) Review the Mail Order Option on your Prescription plan, this could Save you \$\$\$\$, if you elect this option, many time if you use mail order Tier One and Tier Two Generics are No Cost .
- 7) If your Supplement plan has had a series of Rate Increases, have your Agent Shop the Market to see if you can save some money on your Premium costs, (make sure you do not Drop your current plan, until you have been approved by the new carrier)
- 8) Find out about the Changes to Medicare for the New Year. Call your Agent, or go to <https://bit.ly/2otRqQg>, type in changes to Medicare for 2020, and they will give you a list of changes, including part B premium Changes, and Changes to the Deductibles
- 9) Know what the Gaps are in Medicare , such as Home Health Care, Custodial Care, Dental, Vision, Hearing and Long Term Care, or High out of pocket costs on MAPD plans. Have your agent assess what your future needs are, as there are plans that help cover these Gaps
- 10) Set up your Annual Preventative Care Checkups with your Doctors for the new year. (this will ensure you have all bases covered and prevent future Health Problems)
- 11) Look at alternative programs for High Cost or Non Formulary Medications. Sites such as <https://bit.ly/2AU6VUr> or <http://bit.ly/2lBLeg8> , can help you lower your cost of some non formulary medications.
- 12) See if any Free Clinical Trails are available if you have a chronic illness or condition. (these trails are available in certain area's and are Free, some even pay you to enroll in the study, and they can help you save money throughout the year.

Should you need any help with Medicare please feel free to call myself or Crystal Calaway at 281-448-3040. We look forward to your call.

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This might require you to send your passport to your destination's nearest consulate or get a letter of invitation. The bottom line is that if you need a visa, make sure to take care of this at least a month before you travel. If you're planning a last-minute trip and need a visa, don't fret too much as there are usually options to expedite the process for a fee. Once this is set make sure to contact your bank to let them know that you will be travelling out of the country. If you don't they may put a stop on your debit or credit card as they may assume it is being used fraudulently.

The last bit of practical advice before you board your plane is to take some time to learn some common phrases in your destination's native country. While Google Translate (an app that is essential to travelers around the world) can help you communicate, you might not always be in an area with wi-fi or 4G. For this reason, it's important to either make a list of key words and phrases that you will need to know once you land. This not only ingratiates you to the locals (even if you can't quite pronounce things correctly) but can get you out of a tight spot if you are lost or need help. While it might be difficult to memorize phrases like "take me to the hospital" or "call the police" simply learning words like "hello" "yes" or "no" can be really helpful.



TIPS FOR THE AIRPORT AND BEYOND

Travelling can be so stressful that 37% of people have canceled or delayed a trip because of it. However, there are some steps you can take to reduce this stress in order get to your destination feeling relaxed. If you are travelling with meds or a chronic illness there are some steps you should take. One important thing you need to do is make sure that you schedule a ride to the airport well in advance. For most international flights you need to be at the gate at least an hour before takeoff. Not having to worry about parking and taking a shuttle to the terminal can help shave a good chunk of time off your trip to the airport. Nobody likes going through airport security, but it can be a lot easier if you keep all of your relevant documents in one spot for easy access, so you aren't fumbling through your things to find everything. It's also a good idea to put all of your electronics the same section of your carry on so you can easily find and remove them at the security checkpoint.

On a long flight there are a couple of indispensable items that will make your flight as relaxing as it can be:

A good pair of headphones so that you can hear inflight movies, music, or books on tape in case you happen to be seated near noisy children.

Earplugs and an eye mask if you want to get some sleep.

A pen (as well as the address of the hotel or resort that you are staying at) so you can fill out your international arrival card on the plane. Doing this while in the air allows you to whiz by a lot of people who waited until they were on the ground and help you get through the security checkpoint faster. Once you are through the checkpoint and have collected your bags, it might be a good idea to buy a SIM card at a kiosk at the airport. This will allow you to have internet access on your phone anywhere you go within the country which will help you immensely. Getting from the airport to your hotel or resort is easy in many cases. Usually, your accommodations will provide a car or shuttle to get you between places with little hassle. Make sure you contact them beforehand so that they know when you land and can direct you to the location where your transportation will pick you up. Now that you've arrived it's time to take in some local flavor.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

There is one simple rule for international travel: Keep an open mind. Things are going to be strange and different and communicating will be difficult. Just try to relax and go with the flow. While it's convenient to take care of your currency exchange at the airport, depending on the exchange rate and ATM fees it might be cheaper to just take cash from an ATM or just use your debit card for all of your purchases. Make sure that you contact your bank or credit card to see what these fees are and you might just find that you can skip the currency exchange altogether.

If you have any questions about where to go your concierge will probably speak English and help you find cool local places to check out as well as tell you what sections of town to avoid.

When it comes to the local food it's easy to be intimidated. Just remember, if you happen upon a popular dish that seems a little off-putting, that this meal is popular because people like it. While it might take a time or two to wrap your palate around it, you may find that really enjoy it. Remember the best way to make the most of your trip is to be accepting of new and different things while not stressing out about minor roadblocks—accept them as part of your adventure. Bon voyage!

New Texas state law cracks down on roof scams

A new state law makes it clear that it's illegal for a contractor or roofer to waive an insurance deductible.

"This new law will help further protect consumers," said Texas Insurance Commissioner Kent Sullivan. "Roofers who waive deductibles are cutting corners. Take your business elsewhere."

After a major storm, contractors – including some scam artists – are quick to arrive on the scene. This leads to shoddy repairs, fake contracts, and other problems. The Texas Department of Insurance created a special fraud unit that meets with local officials after a disaster and explains steps they can take to protect residents from contractor scams.



Edlin Juarez

Meet Our Representative.

Edlin has more than 10 years experience in the insurance industry. Her specialty is Auto/Home personal lines and comes from the sunshine state. She moved from California to Channelview, TX and has been there ever since. She is bi-lingual, speaking English and Spanish. She has a loving husband and has been married for over 6 years. Edlin is also a professional make up artist and spends her free time making her friends/family even more beautiful.

ABM Bad Joke Of The Month...

What do mermaids wash their fins with?

Tide.



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One selling point bad contractors often use is offering to waive or absorb the homeowner's deductible. The contractor then cuts corners, uses lower quality products, or inflates the bill sent to the insurance company to cover the difference.

It is illegal for contractors or roofers to offer to waive a deductible or promise a rebate for all or part of a deductible. Under the new law effective September 1, violators could get up to a \$2,000 fine and up to six months in jail.

If a contractor offers to waive a deductible, report it to the Texas Attorney General's Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-621-0508.

Tips to avoid contractor fraud

- Get written estimates on company letterhead with clear contact information.
- Get more than one bid to gauge which ones are too high or too good to be true.
- Check references and phone numbers.
- Beware of those who only have out-of-town references or solicit door to door.
- Don't pay in full up front and don't make a final payment until the job is done.
- Never sign a contract with blanks on it.

If you need help with any roofing claim contact ABM Home Department at 281-448-3040.

How a DUI affects your insurance



A DUI's effect on your auto premium could be as high as a 250% increase or as low as 37%. The difference depends on where you live.

Aside from the physical and emotional cost of a DUI or DWI, driving under the influence could wind up costing you up to \$20,000 in legal fees and fines, and the additional cost to your insurance could skyrocket, depending on your driving history.

Auto insurance premiums are calculated based on what your insurer calculates your individual risk to be, and a DUI is among the costliest factors that could determine your risk.

According to CoverHound, in the first year after getting a DUI, your car insurance premium could go up as high as 94.13%. After the second and third year, granted no additional moving violations, premiums could lower slightly, but it will still cost you. On the third year after a DUI, the average premium rings in at a 63.74% increase.

State-by-state differences

To get a better estimate of how a DUI would affect auto premium increases, analyze local data as rate increases vary state-by-state. For instance, in Maine, the average rate increase after a DUI is 37%, way below the national average of 80%, and significantly lower than North Carolina's average increase of 371%.



Among the states with the highest premium rate increases are Michigan (249%), California (186%), Hawaii (208%), Arizona (145%), New Jersey (132%), Delaware (81%), Georgia (78%) and Rhode Island (68%).

The states with the lowest rate increases are Maryland (28%), Indiana and Maine (37%), Vermont (41%), Alaska and Wisconsin (46%), and New York (47%).

The average national dollar increase to auto premiums after a DUI is \$1,163, and the average rate cost rings in at \$2,610 each year.

The real cost of a DUI

Driving under the influence is undoubtedly one of the most dangerous decisions a person could make, threatening the wellbeing of not only the driver, but every other driver and passenger on the road. It is a violation so serious, some insurance companies might not even raise your rates — they'll just cancel your policy altogether.

This becomes the worst-case scenario for your wallet. If you are forced to shop for a new policy, you will not only have a DUI on your record driving up your rates, but also a policy cancellation that will cost you even more as your risk multiplies.

A DUI will stay on your criminal record for the rest of your life, but eventually, it will be cleared from your DMV record, which is the good news for your wallet. Insurance companies only see what's on your DMV record, so after a DUI has cleared, your rates will eventually go down. How long this takes, however, varies by state.

In most states, a DUI or DWI will stay on your DMV record for at least 5-10 years, but some states are significantly stronger on this. In New Mexico, for example, a DUI stays on your record for 55 years — so potentially the rest of your life. The best way to calculate the cost of your DUI is to talk to ABM Insurance, and when your rate undoubtedly increases, shop around as you may be able to find a cheaper option.

If you need help, call our Auto Insurance department at 281-448-3040 should you have any questions.

Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) warns of insurance phone scam

The Texas Department of Insurance is urging consumers to be wary of calls from a group claiming to be the Consumer Insurance



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Association. The calls offer to lower your auto insurance costs and ask about your current coverage. It's a scam.

The caller may mention the names of well-known insurance companies, and the phone number may originate from any state. But Consumer Insurance Association is not a licensed insurance company or agency in Texas.

"This could be an attempt to get you to reveal personal information for identity theft," said Chris Davis, head of TDI's Fraud Unit. "It's always good to be cautious of anyone who calls when you haven't asked for information. And never give out personal information when you haven't verified who's calling."

If you get a call offering to lower your insurance costs, ask for the agent's Texas insurance license number. Don't provide personal information such as your address, birth date, Social Security number, or bank account numbers.

It is best to report these incident to Texas Department of Insurance if you are approached by these types of scammers. You can reach TDI Fraud unit at bit.ly/2OBoDnE



Self-Employed? Here's How to Save Up to \$62,000 a Year for Retirement

If you're self-employed, here's how you can sock away up to \$62,000 per year in your nest egg. By: Robert Powell

Are you self-employed and wondering how best to save for retirement, and which type of account is best? Well, look no further than what's been called one-participant 401(k) plan, solo 401(k), solo-k, uni-k, or a one-participant k. These plans are nothing more than a traditional 401(k) plan for a business owner that has no employees, or for a business owner and his/her spouse. And what's really great about these plans, according to Uncle Sam, is that business owner wears two hats in a 401(k) plan: employee and employer. And contributions can be made to the plan in both capacities, says the IRS.



Here's what you need to know about contributing to a solo 401(k). There's The elective deferral, the catch-up contribution for those age 50 and older, and the employer nonelective contributions.

First, the elective deferral. You as a self-employed individual can defer up to up to 100% of earned income up to the annual contribution limit, which is \$19,000 in 2019. The catch-up contribution. If you're age 50 or over you can defer another \$6,000 on top of the \$19,000. That makes it \$25,000.

The employer nonelective contribution. And then, as the employer, you can sock away up to 25% of earned income in the solo 401(k). Note: Earned income is defined as net earnings from self-employment after deducting both one-half of your self-employment tax, and contributions for yourself.

Bottom line?

Total contributions to your solo 401(k) account, not counting catch-up contributions for those age 50 and over, cannot exceed \$56,000. But if count catch-up contributions, the total you can contribute is \$62,000. Need up setting up an IRA or 401k? Call our staff at 800-362-2809



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Hi Crystal -

Thank you for all your help in navigating the complicated Medicare environment and helping us make good choices for our health care. You made it as easy as it gets!

-Deb

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ABM Referral Program

Be sure to ask ABM about our bonus referral program which rewards our clients who send us business with \$25 Visa Gift card to use at your favorite store or restaurant.



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ABM offers \$25 gift certificate for those who refer a client to us and they buy a policy with ABM.



Save with ABM Insurance - up to 37%!



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Our team is here to answer questions for our clients.

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