

“but I send people there and they say, ‘No problem.’”

• **A place in the sun.** Vacationers generally “go to the sun,” he says, and that often means Hawaii or Mexico. One of his favorite Mexican destinations is Bucerias, north of Puerto Vallarta. “It’s like the way it was in the 1950s,” says Walker, who recommends Bucerias to vacationers who want a Mexican experience and “don’t want to see Wal-Mart across the street.”

• **Cruises.** Baby boomers have a growing interest in cruises, Walker says. Nowadays there’s almost nothing you can’t do on a cruise ship — passengers rock climb, watch big-screen movies, even surf onboard. Cruising also is multigenerational — “it seems like 50th anniversaries are big for the whole family,” he says. Barges offer another type of cruising, particularly in Europe, where smaller vessels sail on rivers and canals in France, Croatia, Italy and other countries.

• **Disney.** Walker doesn’t refer to just Disneyland or Disney World. “You can’t get away from the Disney products,” he explains, pointing out that Disney also operates two cruise ships in addition to its world-famous theme parks.

Advice from a pro

• **Need a passport? Apply ASAP.** U.S. citizens are now

required to carry a valid U.S. passport to fly into Canada and Mexico — and by Jan. 1, 2008, they’ll need passports to travel by land or sea to those neighboring countries. So send your applications “right now,” Walker says, “because it’s taking three months.” Learn more by visiting www.travel.state.gov.

• **Stay current on travel alerts.** Walker recommends logging onto www.tsa.gov for updated travel bulletins from the U.S. Transportation Security Administration.

• **But don’t worry too much.** Some people won’t travel because they fear flying or they heard about a bombing

on the London Underground, to which Walker usually responds with a statistic about the number of traffic accidents in the United States. “Do you know what I tell them? ‘I have great insurance I can sell you,’” he says, chuckling.

• **Upgrade with your air miles.** Instead of using those air miles to get a free plane ticket, spend them on better seats if you can. Or pay an extra \$50 or so to upgrade to a coach-class seat with more legroom, if available.

• **Take advantage of airport services.** “Airports are chaos,” Walker says, “so use the services they have.” One of the best is curbside check-in, where

passengers can check their bags and obtain their boarding passes, thus bypassing the lines at the airline counters. “It costs \$2 a bag, but it’s well worth it,” Walker says.

• **Show grace under pressure.** If your overbooked flight bumps you or your hotel loses your reservation, stay cool. “A lot of it is attitude,” Walker says. “It’s not the fault of the person on the other side of the counter.” Being nice sometimes has its perks, too: The Walkers arrived for one cruise only to learn that the ship didn’t have a cabin for them. “Give me an hour,” the reservation clerk asked the couple. “So we went for coffee and

read the *Wall Street Journal* and ended up with a better cabin than the one we’d reserved,” Walker says.

• **Climb it if you can.** Some famous attractions eventually become off-limits to visitors from overuse, Walker says. That’s why, while visiting the pre-Columbian city of Chichen Itza

in Mexico, he trekked to the top of the pyramid. “If you’re in good shape, you can walk to the top,” he says. He also has climbed inside the torch of the Statue of Liberty, which is now closed.

• **Walk, don’t ride.** “You really get more out of traveling when you walk places,” he says.

• **Make your own travel memories.** Walker savors the small pleasures of travel: “Walking through Central Park, holding my wife’s hand on a 70-degree day, I listen to how many languages are spoken there,” he says.

Travel also can include deeply personal rituals. When Walker visited Vietnam, he made a special trip to the former presidential estate in memory of a pair of high school friends, Earl Hill and Mike Wilkins, who died in the Vietnam War. A tennis player, Walker had seen photos of the palatial quarters’ tennis court. “I found the tennis court and stomped on it and said the names of my friends who had died,” he recalls.

“Travel can bring you those kinds of experiences.”



Photos clockwise from top left: Doug Walker at the summit of Diamond Head in Hawaii; Walker at a museum in Vietnam posing with a U.S. tank; passengers surfing on board a Royal Caribbean cruise ship; Vietnamese school girls.

Photos supplied by Doug Walker

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