

Top Ten Things You Should Know About Travel Training Seniors

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1. Through years of training in several locations along the East Coast we have found this truth to be self evident - Seniors want to travel to two places – the mall or a casino.
2. While the purpose of travel training is to increase the independence of seniors, they enjoy traveling with their friends – think of them as “high schoolers with grey hair”. Traveling with a buddy also reassures the individuals, that are not too steady on their feet or have issues with security. Security here means their general well being. It also is a lot more fun for them if they have someone to talk to – many seniors live alone and training provides them with the opportunity to feel connected to someone.
3. Teach your seniors how to read the bus or the train schedule. If the printing on the schedule is too small, begin with enlarged printed schedule first. In order to maintain their level of comfort, remind them to carry the schedule with them when they travel and where to call if they are in need of assistance.
4. Keep your eye on the weather. Seniors will not travel when it is too cold, hot, rainy, snowy or icy. While minor weather inconveniences may not effect your training, if the local weather forecaster has been talking about an upcoming storm for days, seniors will not come out. If you are training in the summer, be sure to either provide your seniors with water or have them bring their own with them. If seniors become dehydrated, you will have problems.

5. As part of your training, spend time on preparing seniors for a trip. Discuss what to wear, safety tips, what to take with you and other real life issues. Just because your seniors might only be taking a ½ hour trip, they still need to be prepared! It helps with their comfort level.
6. Paying the fare on any system can be confusing, so the easiest and cheapest method of payment is the best. Be sure your seniors are prepared with the easiest way. Make them aware of any restrictions.
7. Don't be surprised if the seniors' children do not want them to use public transportation. Be sure the children understand the benefits, not only to the seniors, but to them.
8. If a senior has been travel trained and still does not want to ride – there probably is another reason. Ask a few questions to determine whether or not there is something that can be done. If the issue is with the transit company, for example, the buses do not kneel or the bus driver is mean, make sure someone at that system understands the issue and how it is effecting their ridership. Instruct seniors how to register a complaint.
9. Be sure to have fun, make it fun for the seniors and make them laugh. If you can talk loudly, without a microphone, do that. A microphone distorts the sound.
10. Share your transportation stories with them – but only tell the ones with happy endings. Mentally keep a list of the ones that they like to retell at other events.