

Don's Home News

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How to Get the Most Out of Frequent Flyer Miles

Frequent flyer miles can really add up, especially for those who know how to make the most of perks and other credit card incentives.

With a bit of planning and preparation, they might be your ticket to a great vacation destination or family outing.

After all, in tough economic times every little bit counts.

Following are four tips to help you get the most out of your frequent flyer miles:

1. Think Big: The best overall savings come from accumulating enough points for big trips rather than short overnight stays. Just be sure to watch out for expiration dates.

2. Routine Savings: Streamline record keeping and compile points by using a credit card for routine purchases. However, make sure you pay off the balance each month to avoid paying interest on everyday items like groceries.

3. Remain Flexible: It's often possible to get some great seats if you are willing to be flexible with dates, times and even destinations. For example, rather than departing from a busy airport, try one with a little less traffic. Ditto for flying on holidays or during peak periods. Opt for off-peak periods instead.

4. Ask about Partner Perks: Many major airlines allow frequent flyer miles to be used on partner flights if you ask. Stick to the same carrier or alliance to boost the odds of obtaining the best seats.

Searching for a New Home on line?

Now you can search Metro Atlanta listings in real time just like real estate agents do.

Due to recent changes in multiple listing service rules, I can now set you up with an account where you can search for properties just like I do. No more stale and out of date data like you get on the internet from Realtor.com, and Trulia.com.

Call or [email](mailto:don@donzahnle.com) me today for more information or to have me set up an account for you. It is FREE and takes only minutes for me to set it up.

The Best on the Web This Month

Following are some useful links from the web that are sure to provide you with some interesting information and ways to entertain yourself:

What Alcohol Actually Does to Your Brain and Body

by Kevin Purdy for lifel hacker.com

This well-researched article takes a close look at the scientific interaction between you and alcohol.

More: <http://tinyurl.com/2cxu522>

Tips from a Flight Attendant

by Taylor Kenny for lifel hacker.com

This piece by an experienced "stew" helps restore some of the control you've lost as a member of today's flying public. Our tip: If you're about to travel, don't read the part about drunk, sleepy pilots and attendants.

More: <http://tinyurl.com/2w8xhdt>

What Grieving People Need from You

by Julia McKinnell for Macleans.ca

This review of The Art of Comforting: What to Say and do for People In Distress offers support for those of us who don't know what to do when someone else is in distress.

More: <http://tinyurl.com/2armgeg>

How To: Unlock the Airplane Lavatory Door (From the Outside)

by Alexis Ohanian for Hipmunk.com blog

This one might be useful if you are traveling with young children. We can't all visit an A380 flight simulator, so we're very grateful to Alexis Ohanian for this useful how-to. Yes, it can be done. And yes, it should only be done when absolutely necessary.

More: <http://tinyurl.com/26hhane>

Why Buying a House on Emotion Is a Losing Strategy

For years, economists have used the study of behavioral finance to explain the role emotions play in investment decisions. Their observations have turned up some interesting results.

First, they've found that while investors know very well that the stock market has its ups and downs, some will still base investment decisions on the assumption that what's happening now will continue in the future. For example, the home buyer driven by a hot market will engage in bidding wars, assuming that the market will continue to heat up. The buyer believes he or she has to buy now or lose out.

Second, they've found that other investors follow the "anchoring" concept, in which they hold off selling an asset in hopes that it will increase in value despite evidence to the contrary.

In this scenario, home buyers stubbornly anchor themselves to an offering price even though the seller and buyer are only a few hundred dollars apart.

Third, they've found that some investors buy too much house for their budget or they forget about the crumbling foundation, because they love the seller's décor.

Fourth, they've found that other investors fail to see beyond the clutter as to possibilities of a home.

To prevent such problems, the emotional home buyer needs the perspective of a real estate agent.

Such a professional can separate the emotion from the investment so your dream house won't become a nightmare.

How to Use Date Nights to Keep Romance Alive

It's a catchy television ad, to say the least.

A sheepish pizza delivery guy is met at the door by a lingerie-clad lady and enticed inside to share her pizza.

Cue disgusted teen boy, who announces: "You're not a delivery boy ... Dad. No wonder I don't have any friends."

Ah, yes, the time-honored tradition of date night, when a married couple with kids steals time from their busy schedules for a weekly rendezvous.

Everybody seems to be doing it - even President Barack Obama and first lady Michelle.

They've been spotted all over Washington enjoying each other's company.

According to Arthur Aron, a professor of social psychology at State University of New York at Stony Brook, you need to introduce some novelty into the game.

In an article that appeared in the New York Times, he suggested that new experiences with your partner fool the brain into re-creating the same feelings and releasing the same hormones you had in the early stages of romantic love.

If you don't think you can keep the romance alive by revisiting old haunts, then try something new.

Walk on the beach, visit the zoo or even take up the tango.

And don't talk about money or the kids.

Talk about those things you love to do.

"When people talk about their passions, they light up and the brain chemistry changes," says a blogger named jpwriter at Ehow.com.

Quick Quiz

Each month I'll give you a new question.

Just email me at donzahnle@gmail.com for the answer.

What movie marked the Hollywood film debut of William Shatner?

Why Not Pass Me to a Friend?

If you've enjoyed this newsletter and found its information useful, please pass it to a neighbor, friend or co-worker.

And if you have any comments about it, don't forget to give me a call or send me their email address and I will see that they get a copy.!

Wondering How Much Your Home Is Worth?

How has the price of your home changed in today's market? How much are other homes in your neighborhood selling for?

If you're wondering what's happening to prices in your area, or you're thinking about selling your house, I'll be able to help.

Just give my office a call for a no-fuss, professional evaluation.

I won't try to push you into listing with me or waste your time.

I'll just give you the honest facts about your home and its value.

And maybe I'll also give you the "inside scoop" on what's happening in the housing market near where you live!

Call me at 404-939-1309 or email me at donzahnle@gmail.com to arrange a time to get together.

Tips for Conducting a Home Energy Audit

Today's typical family living in a three-bedroom, two-story home spends about \$2,500 in energy costs each year. To better manage those costs, consider conducting your own energy audit.

It's easy.

First of all, find out how much energy is being used, by keeping a log and reading your meter each week.

At the end of four weeks, add up the kilowatts used and divide the total by the number of days to get your average daily usage.

Once the audit is complete and changes are made, monitor usage again.

The next step is to walk around the house and check for the following:

Inside

- Any air leaks and gaps at baseboards and where the walls and ceilings end up joining
- Air leaks around electrical outlets, switch plates, window frames and baseboards
- Gaps and cracks in weather stripping around doors, fireplace dampers, attic hatches and air conditioners
- Gaps around pipes and wires
- Air leaks from mail slots
- Rattling from windows and doors, and daylight leaking in around frames

Outside

- Air leaks where two building materials meet
- Improperly caulked doors, windows and outdoor outlets
- Cracks in the mortar, foundation or siding
- Missing insulation in the home's structure
- Improperly functioning heating/cooling equipment
- Filters that need replacing on forced-air furnaces
- Missing insulation on water heaters, hot water pipes and furnace ducts

Tips for Avoiding the Common Cold

There may not be a cure for the common cold, but there are ways to limit your chances of infection and alleviate suffering. Following are some tips:

Exercise More

Research indicates that regular exercise decreases your chance of catching the common cold by nearly half.

Let the Sun Shine In

Sunshine is a natural source of vitamin D, which helps reduce the risk of both the common cold and the influenza virus. According to researchers, people with higher levels of vitamin D are much less likely to suffer from seasonal illnesses, including colds, flu and even seasonal affective disorder.

Wash and Rinse

Frequent hand washing, combined with a quick gargle and even the use of a nasal rinse, can dramatically reduce the rates of infection. Use a saltwater solution for both the gargle and nasal rinse to help eliminate sore throats and sinus pressure.

What's the Secret to Good Chocolate?

The magic of chocolate is all about the senses.

Take, for example, the snapping sound it makes when you break a piece off. That indicates it's well-tempered chocolate with high cocoa content.

Then there's the feel of it. Good chocolate shouldn't feel waxy or rough. It should melt in your mouth, literally.

Pros categorize chocolate aromas using

a whole host of descriptors such as nutty, spicy, sweet and earthy. They can taste its initial flavors, middle notes and finishes.

All factors considered, though, the most important sense of all is the way you feel when you eat it.

As one blogger puts it: "Does it really matter? It makes me feel happy."

That's the real magic of chocolate.

Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

I understand that having a focal point in a room helps buyers feel at home. How can I best create one?

Some rooms have natural focal points, such as a fireplace, architectural details or a picture window with a view.

But if your room has none of these, you could try placing a large piece of furniture such as an armoire or a tall bookcase along one wall, using an ornate mirror or large painting, or adding a table with your favorite collectibles arranged on it.

If you have a large, flat-screen television, this might make a suitable focal point, but many people prefer not to make a TV the center of attention, as it can look unattractive when switched off.

The focal point doesn't have to be on the wall - an area rug placed under a coffee table can also work well. A fireplace is perhaps the best focal point in a living room. To accent it further, place a painting or mirror above the hearth.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

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1		3		4	2			
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Sudoku instructions: Complete the 9x9 grid so that each row, each column and each of the nine 3x3 boxes contains the digits 1 through 9.

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Recipe: Valentine's Chocolate Fondue

Serves 2

- 6 ounces good-quality dark or semi-sweet chocolate
- ½ cup whipping cream
- 1 tablespoon Frangelico or preferred liqueur, optional

Some Dipping Ideas:

- Pound cake cut into bite-size cubes
- Strawberries, bananas, pineapple, dried fruit (apricots, crystallized ginger, etc.)
- Hard pretzels, graham crackers, lady fingers, mini meringues

Directions

Break up chocolate into small pieces and set aside. Heat the cream over medium heat in a fondue pot or on the stove. Before the cream boils, lower the heat and add the chopped chocolate. Allow it to sit for a few minutes, then begin to stir gently. Continue stirring until all the chocolate has melted.

Add liqueur (if using) and serve with your favorite dipping items. This recipe can be doubled.

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