Next time you're planning a trip, don't automatically start checking guidebooks or TripAdvisor for the best things to do. Think about booking your trip through a travel agent—here's a few reasons why you should.

Travel Agent (noun): ***Someone that helps plan trips and book air tickets, hotel reservations, train tickets, car rentals, cruises, tours and packages***

This information is provided by Kelly Rubingh, of Family Travel, as told to the museum. For more information and to book your next vacation with Family Travel, please visit www.family.travel/home.html.

Travel agents are very helpful when planning a trip as they save you the time of doing the research, they share their knowledge, they often have personal experience with their recommendations, and they can save you money by searching for the best deal.

Travel agents also book specialty vacations, such as a safari to Africa or a small ship expedition to the Galapagos Islands. These are things that can be hard to book on your own, especially because the options can be overwhelming when searching the web. A travel agent will know which companies are reputable and reliable, and give recommendations that cater to what you are looking to do.

Travel agents also have access to tour packages, which can make travel cheaper when you combine the air with a hotel and car rental or transfers. These are popular when going to destinations such as Hawaii, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

Travel agents often specialize in a particular niche. For me, that niche is Family Travel, so I really know a lot about where to go with kids and the best things to do in destinations that families will enjoy. I sell a lot of Disney vacations and cruises, and give specialized tips and tricks to know when visiting the parks. Beach destinations, national parks, cruises, and active tours are also very popular with families.

Travel agents are very helpful when there is a problem, like if a flight gets cancelled or there is an emergency and you have to cancel a trip. They will rebook your air tickets, cancel or change your reservations, and file claims with travel insurance for you. They can also give you advice quickly on options if you get stuck somewhere.

Most travel agents do not charge for their services, as we are paid a commission by the travel company we book the trip with. This doesn't add anything to the price of the trip, so it makes a lot of sense to have a specialist do the work of planning, researching, and booking for you as it can save a lot of time. Some exceptions that a travel agent might charge a fee for are booking airline tickets, as we are not paid a commission for that, or when planning an extensive or long trip, which will require a lot of time. If there are going to be fees involved, the travel agent will let you know what they are ahead of time.

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