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Living a Fairy Tale

Sit back for a story about a traveling salesman and an evil witch

Once upon a time, there was a business traveler (let's call him Hy Flyer) who had the great fortune to be an executive vice president and top sales-maker in his global widget manufacturing company. He traveled an average of 39 weeks a year on fast-paced sales calls that put him across the desk from the top widget procurement and marketing professionals in the free world. There was no stopping Hy, as he nailed one big account after another.

His boss loved him and Hy loved his traveling life.

And the perks----oh, the perks! Hy flew first class all the way-----he held platinum memberships at airport clubs; scored full-flat seats on trans-oceanic flights, and when he landed, slipped with a self-satisfied smile into sleek town cars waiting curbside.

At the end of each successful day, Hy shed his elegantly tailored Brioni suit and stowed his Pineider Power Elegance leather briefcase in stunning corner hotel suites that perched majestically on hillsides and hugged harbors in the world's sparkling Big Cities. Each evening, he reveled in client dinners, rich with award-winning cuisine, fine wines and smooth-as-silk cognacs---top shelf all the way. Chalk it up to the cost of doing business, Hy's company bean counters said, and Hy agreed to soldier on.

And then one day, while Hy was meeting with an Italian tailor to select new fabrics for his spring wardrobe, the Wicked Witch of The West (let's call her Econ Omy) lurched out of her deceptively pretty gingerbread cottage deep in the forest and went on a shocking rampage.

The old girl hurled stock brokerage firms through their 50-story window walls and spun stock prices into the ground like giant corkscrews. Banks, the bigger the better, were reduced to cord wood in her wake, and the housing sector scattered like tiny plastic buildings flicked off an upended Monopoly board. The auto industry shuddered to a herky-jerky halt when she scattered the roadways with telephone-pole-size road spikes.

Satisfied with the breadth and width of destruction, Econ Omy straightened her flowing robes and swept back into the woods. Slipping into her cozy cottage, she settled in to a comfy chair next to windows slightly ajar, where she reveled in the haunting cacophony of soft moans, loud shrieks and mournful sobs wafting on the autumn breezes.

It's likely that no one shrieked or moaned louder than our intrepid traveler, Hy Flyer. The day after The Rampage, his company's head bean counter called him in to discuss the company's new and drastically altered travel policy.

Hy heard phrases like "compliance," "accountable," "coach class" and "clean-but-simple rooms." Client meals, the bean counter intoned, were to be "modest" and preferably "simple breakfasts."

Sleek town cars were out, shared airport shuttles or even (shudder) "public transportation" were the new norm. Airports club dues, dry cleaning, and the hotel mini-bar were now non-reimbursable, and the company-issue BlackBerry would be exchanged for a basic cell phone with limited roaming. Confused and bereft, Hy hung his head and sobbed at the terrible, wrenching, painful unfairness of it all.

In time, bent but not broken, our intrepid traveler rallied and set out with his trademark single-mindedness to find cost-cutting measures that would keep him traveling, though perhaps not in the style he'd hoped to enjoy indefinitely. He collected tips and resources and (because this is our fairy tale and we can script him to do what we want) he generously offered to share them with others.

First, Hy faced the realities of traveling coach class, quickly educating himself to tactics that might make his trip a tad more bearable. He reviewed [frequent flyer and hotel stay programs](#) and program features, weeding out his fringe memberships and retaining only those he knew he would use most frequently.

Then he aligned himself with a travel agency that offers sophisticated seat assignment technology so he could avoid the “dreaded middle seat,” a hardship unknown to first class travelers. For good measure, he bookmarked [SeatGuru](#) on his laptop to help zero in on the most comfortable of the coach class seats.

He learned that in recent months, mid-priced hotels have been surging out of the development pipeline all around the country, in great geysers of hip new “lifestyle” concepts. He researched [Aloft](#), [Hotel Indigo](#), and perennials like [Holiday Inns](#), undergoing changes globally and now designated with a big green “H.”

Though he dreaded the thought of giving up his cushy private car services, Hy Flyer found plenty of resources for airport-to-hotel transportation, like [Super Shuttle](#), available in over 35 cities nationally and [ShuttleFare](#), a site to book home/office to airport shuttles at many destinations.

Because Hy frequently flies out of Milwaukee Mitchell Airport, he signed up for the rewards program at the [Fast Park and Relax](#), thus ensuring he’d have a discounted parking place AND a shuttle to the door of his departure terminal.

And, for good measure because he’s a frequent visitor to Seattle, Washington, Hy researched [Sound Transit](#), the region’s new light rail system that would take him from downtown Seattle to a new transfer station at Tukwila (about three miles from the airport) where he could board a free connector bus to airport terminals.

Because Hy no longer had airport club memberships, he was at a loss where to look for diversions as he languished in airports. His research brought him to this [USAToday chart](#) that detailed reader’s picks for major US airport restaurants, shops, and even onsite hotels, if he should need to overnight due to a canceled flight. Though he hoped he would not need the information, he also bookmarked this “[sleeping in airports](#)” website from Budget Travel.

By now, it was clear to Hy that he had perhaps lived a bit lavishly, and he vowed to rein in his extravagant impulses and become a thoughtful and resourceful traveler. He has simplified his life, and that gives him more time to keep a watchful eye on the wicked Econ Omy.

Occasionally, she rustles in the forest, and he’s not about to let her catch him or his company off guard, ever again.....*The End*