

Are You Going to Your Local Spring Leadership Conference? Nationals?

Here are some tips for traveling, ways you can stay safe and have fun while away at a group or industry conference.

With the Spring Leadership Conference coming up throughout the Business Professionals of America world, many of them are in larger areas or cities. So, what are some conference going “Do’s and Don’ts”? In this article you are going to read some tips I have come up with from what I learned while traveling to different conferences.

Firstly, before you head to this conference, make sure to plan ahead. This could mean many different things. Some things I would recommend would be,

1. **Plan Ahead:** While most of your time might be sitting or participating in a conference, not all of your time is going to be consumed by it. Depending on your interests, it is a good idea to hit up google and see what types of attractions and activities are around you. [Trip Advisor](#) is always a good one to look on for all types of activities and attractions and it also gives people’s reviews of them as well. Also, if it something popular, get your tickets ahead of time in order to avoid lines and the hassle of being sold out when you get there.
2. **Packing:** Depending on how long you are going, this will tell you if you pack too much or too little and what size bag you are going to need. With packing, I would also recommend packing at least two days before you have to leave. This will give you time to make sure you have everything and to go pick up what you are missing. Also, DON’T forget comfortable shoes, you’ll regret not packing them later on.
3. **Airport Travel:** If none of you have traveled by air before, definitely get there at the recommended 2-hour or before window. This will give you time to check-in, get your bag checked, if you are, get through security and get to your gate, some airports can be confusing to those who have never flown before. Also, if you don’t know for sure where to go, ASK! Airport personnel are more than happy to help you get where you are going. After you get where you need to be before your flight, sit back and relax or hit up the kiosk for a flight snack and the bathroom. Also, on your way off the plane, be patient and don’t get frustrated, it’s always a slow process and some are traveling with children or elderly.
4. **Be Patient and Flexible:** sometimes things change. Maybe your shuttle is late to get where you are going or there is a speaker that you thought would be interesting but a connection wants to meet up at the same time. What was your plan starting off? And what is your priority? Also, double check if they speak again at a different time or ask that connection if they would want to meet at an alternative time.

5. Rest and Relaxation: While at a conference, it can be a long day. With that in mind, it's ok to stay in and sleep because you also don't want to look tired while meeting with connections the next day.
6. So Thirsty: don't forget to rehydrate (having a water bottle is encouraged) often and even bringing a snack is helpful with long days. I sometimes don't have time for a sit-down meal until later in the day but can get by with a small snack.
7. "YOUR ON": while at any conference you have to be on your best behavior because you are going to be meeting many new connections. All the people you interact with at these conferences could potentially be future employers, colleagues and most importantly, a friend. So, you don't want to lose their respect for you beforehand. Also, don't forget to be yourself and be genuine.
8. Safety: While at a conference, a person is able to have fun but do it in a smart and sensible way. With many issues going on through the world you also don't want to get caught up in the wrong issue or be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Here are some tips on staying safe a conference:
 - a. ALWAYS use the buddy system. Never go anywhere on your own and make sure to always be alert to your surroundings. Also, try and make sure there is always three in a group when going and doing things.
 - b. Call for help. If you are out and about and you feel uncomfortable, do not be afraid to call the police for help or to get somewhere. If you are lost, call them or go into a convenience store for directions or wait there until a cab is able to get to you. Also, double check the UBER or LYFT driver's plates and name before getting into their vehicle.
 - c. Dining Out: when you are out for lunch or dinner make sure to never leave food or drinks unattended.

Main thing is to be aware of your surroundings, using common sense and being smart about all situations.

9. After: When you get home and have caught up on sleep from your trip, make sure to do a couple things.
 - a. Re-Connect: make sure you get in touch with any connections you may have made at the conference, within the first two days home. People feel respected and valued if you reach out afterward. Also, don't forget to mention how much of a pleasure it was to meet them.
 - b. Document: Have a picture you wanted to post from your trip but wasn't able to now is the time to do it. Don't forget to tag or use hashtags in your posts. Also, if you really liked something let the organizers know, they do appreciate input from people that have went.

Conferences are always fun and informational. It is also a great way to meet new people and to make those connections, but you also want to be safe while learning and connecting and I hope this article is helpful before heading out. Again, be yourself, have fun and enjoy the learning experience.