

## Excursions TAKE OFF THE BRAKES AND FLY



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**LET'S FACE IT.** By now we've all grown weary of any phrase that begins, "Since Sept. 11...." It's inevitable that such a life-altering event should have a ripple effect on the activities and practices we've all come to take for granted, and travel is no exception. Security restrictions, traveler apprehension and airline-industry cutbacks all have impacted the way we plan our business trips and vacations. But travel we should—and often must—so why not have a game plan in place to alleviate as much undue stress and bother as possible? Below are some time- and grief-saving tips that should help make your next airplane trip a breeze.

### BEFORE YOU GO:

- With higher gas prices on the horizon and an anticipated rise in consumer demand for tickets to such hot spots as Europe, Mexico and Hawaii, higher airline ticket prices are a given. Making your travel arrangements early will give you wiggle room to negotiate a comfortable seat and a reasonable fare.
- While packing, remember that, in the interest of safety, greater restrictions are in place. Now only one piece of carry-on luggage per passenger is allowed. Since that bag will be inspected carefully, avoid delays or the confiscation of your property by packing must-have, but potentially suspect items such as your Swiss army knife, that looks-like-a-gun-barrel curling iron and Grandma's vintage hatpin in the suitcase that will be checked and stowed in the cargo area beneath the plane.

- Consider investing in the new storage bags that vacuum-pack clothing. In addition to decreasing wrinkling and exposure to spillage, the compression feature of the bags makes it possible to cram more clothes into your precious luggage space.

### AT THE AIRPORT:

- Security at domestic and international airports has been heightened dramatically. Intensive security checks, a National Guard presence and closer baggage scrutiny are just a few of these measures. So when you're advised to get to the airport no less than two hours before a domestic flight, take heed. You might be subjected to any combination of time-consuming luggage screenings, body checks and questioning, which can be repeated randomly at any point between the ticket counter and the departure gate.
- You should know that increased security has its price: Congress recently passed a new airline security bill that, among other changes, will now allow the airline industry to assess each ticket-buying passenger an additional \$2.50 per flight to offset the cost of airport security.
- Before you board, be sure to ask whether a meal will be served during your flight. Currently, food service is limited to beverages and snacks or is nonexistent on

many domestic trips. If so, buy the munchies of your choice before you take your seat.

### ON BOARD:

- While still friendly, the skies are a bit more cautious these days. This means that once you've boarded the plane, the head pilot has complete control and discretion when it comes to the safety of his plane and its passengers. If the captain feels there is a security risk, you can bet that plane won't leave the ground until it's resolved.
- Should you have the urge to act like an ugly American, think twice. Any failure to comply with directions or requests from airline personnel, no matter how insipid or inconvenient they might seem, could earn you the wrath of your fellow passengers, get you booted off the plane or even get you arrested.

Measures such as these are now necessary to ensure your swift and safe passage to your destination. Take heart that airline travel is now probably safer than at any other time in history. With planning, patience and the tips above, your next trip should be an enjoyable, low-stress one. Have a great flight! ▼

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