

Executive Air Travel Security Guidelines

Air travel security procedures have been intensified since the foiled August 10th terrorist plot in London to blow up commercial aircraft bound for the US using liquid explosives. The US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has now banned most liquids, gels and lotions, with the exception of medicine and they are also requiring all footwear to be inspected. What should executive travelers expect and how can you make your trip smoother in light of the changes? Here are some practical safety recommendations to increase personal security and minimize hassles:

Before Your Trip, At The Airport and On Board

- **Plan your trip carefully in advance**
Get your tickets in advance or book e-tickets to avoid having to go through extensive check in whenever possible. Be sure you are familiar with or have researched your destination and understand any of the security risks – from crime on the street to the geo-political situation. Check on the status of flights and reconfirm reservations. Be sure to have scheduled on-the-ground transportation and lodging as well.
- **Be sure your documentation is with you and up to date**
Check to make sure your passport, drivers license, and other ID have accurate photographs and are valid and in good standing. You will be required to produce valid identification on several occasions so keep it handy as well. Without proper ID, you are inviting delays or worse, you will not be allowed to travel. Make sure you have any medical emergency information available as well. Keep a copied set of your travel documentation (passport, itinerary & health/emergency information) available at home or with your personal assistant in case of loss or theft during the trip.
- **Pack lightly and with care**
Be sure to pack your own bags and take only that which is necessary for your trip. Fewer checked bags and smaller carry-on means quicker processing through check-in, customs and immigration and random security checks. Make sure your bags are properly tagged as well. Do not use business cards or other company logo. You are allowed only one carry-on bag, such as a briefcase or laptop bag. Be prepared to produce laptops and other electronic gadgets for inspection. Liquids, gels and lotions are now banned from carry-on so leave them in your checked luggage or buy them upon arrival. Up to four ounces of non-prescription medicine and baby formula/breast milk are allowed. Proscribed medicines can also be brought on board, but be sure all medicines are clearly marked for easy inspection. We advise that you keep them all in a clear plastic zip-lock bag along with copies of the prescriptions. Of

course, no weapons or sharp objects, including knives, scissors or sharp threatening objects of any kind, will be allowed in carry-on. A full list of TSA banned and allowed items is here: http://www.tsa.gov/assets/pdf/Permitted_Prohibited_NEW.pdf. Finally, if you are traveling with gifts in your carry-on, do not wrap them so that they can be easily inspected.

- **Allow for plenty of time**
Increased security at airports (and bus and train terminals) will require more time for passengers to be processed. Allow at least an hour and a half to get through check in and security clearance. Curbside check-in is done on an airline by airline basis and may not be available. Curbside parking is heavily restricted so consider private car service or public transportation to and from the airport. While we are somewhat used to this fact on international flights, it will become a fact of life for domestic flights as well.
- **Dress casually**
In order to proceed through security checkpoints without setting off metal detectors, strictly limit jewelry and other metal objects you normally wear, such as bracelets, watches, chains, and belt buckles. The new security guidelines require that you take your shoes off for screening, so wear footwear that is easy to take off and put on.
- **Cooperate with authorities and airport personnel**
Increased security at airports (and bus/train terminals) means more frequent random security checks as well as increased scrutiny by authorities and airport personnel at parking lots, curbside, ticket counters, security gates, airport gates and on the plane. Be patient, respectful and cooperative with any authority figure that might stop and question you. Above all, do not make inappropriate comments that may land you in a detention area being questioned by authorities.
- **Be alert for unattended packages and terminal scams**
Report unattended packages to airport authorities. Scams and theft at airport terminals is still a problem, particularly in some overseas airports, in spite of increased security. Laptops and handbags are often targets of opportunity for criminals who distract passengers in some way and then steal the bag. Disguise laptops from would-be thieves by placing them inside a nondescript travel carry-on bag. Do not leave baggage unattended and keep them close to your body. Do not accept any packages from anyone to bring on board.
- **Be attentive and courteous on board**
Follow the instructions of flight crew at all times and do not engage in disruptive or confrontational behavior.

Security Upon Arrival

- **Morning arrivals are better**
Since crime is statistically more prevalent at night, a morning arrival is generally more secure. This is advised especially when arriving in foreign destinations with which you are not familiar.

- **Arrange transport from airport**
Be sure to take only officially sanctioned taxis and public transportation. I prefer taxis over public buses since you are more insulated. Better yet, pre-arrange transportation from the airport with a reputable car service. Most airports and other transportation terminals have clearly marked areas for taxis, public transportation and car service pick-up. Certain destinations, such as Mexico City, have had problems with rogue taxi drivers who end up holding passengers hostage and robbing them.

- **Maintain a low profile and vary your routine**
Criminals try to identify lucrative and easy victims – often “wealthy Americans” who are traveling alone on business. Dress “down,” if possible, and leave the flashy jewelry, including expensive watches and chains, at home. The object is to blend in as best you can, but in any case, you do not want to stand out. Cultural and racial differences may make this impossible, in which case you can still make yourself look like a person of modest means. Kidnappers and extortionists identify their targets and then watch their potential victims to determine daily patterns. Therefore, especially in high-risk countries, be alert for surveillance and vary your routine.

- **Stay in quality hotels**
Generally speaking, the nicer, more expensive hotels are situated in safer areas and have better security. This must be balanced with keeping a low profile. Overseas, especially in third-world countries, we recommend staying above the 2nd floor & below the 8th floor. This is because the first floor may not be safe from burglars and there is greater risk in the event of a fire on the higher floors.

- **Don’t leave sensitive information in your room**
Business travelers should be careful to safeguard sensitive information in your room without securing it. Economic espionage is a problem in some countries and your trade secrets may be vulnerable if left unattended.

- **Use a money belt**
Keep your valuables, including passport, return tickets, cash, etc., in a money belt concealed under your clothes. Pickpockets and thieves still operate widely in many cities, large and small, around the world, but especially near tourist attractions.

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- **Check credit cards when they are returned**
One common scam in tourist areas abroad (and, to a lesser extent in the US), is for unscrupulous shops and restaurants to keep your credit card and hand you back some other hapless victim's card. In cahoots with others, they then use your card to run up all kinds of purchases or telecommunications charges.
- **Be careful of the nightlife**
Another recent phenomenon overseas is for patrons at bars and discotheques to be drugged and robbed so watch your drinks being poured. Be sure to get advice from hotel concierge about reputable nightlife establishments and, especially when on business, avoid unnecessary circulation after dark. Make sure you to have your hotel arrange taxis and know the addresses and directions ahead of time.
- **Avoid disturbances**
Our natural tendency is to rush to the scene of an accident or other public incident. This is dangerous, especially in foreign countries where the political stability of the government is in question. Protests can quickly become violent and they are best avoided.
- **Do not eat food from street vendors**
If your health matters, be very careful about eating unwashed fruits and food from street vendors. In many countries it is advisable to drink bottled water.
- **Pay attention to what you bring home**
Finally, make sure that any gifts or items purchased while on your trip conform to customs regulations from country to country and back in the US. Certainly do not bring anything back that could be construed as a weapon and leave them unwrapped for easy inspection by customs.

Executive travelers can make their travel process speedier and more secure by following these common sense suggestions. A little common sense can go a long way toward providing a safe and hassle-free trip by air. While there are always ambient risks, we must rely on our own vigilance and the government's competence to keep us out of harms way. More detailed travel security advice can be obtained from the US State Department at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/19795.pdf>.

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