

## What To Do While Waiting for a Flight: A Survivors Guide

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

The long and winding road ... Sometimes that's exactly how it feels when you've got a flight to catch. With all the increased security measures, you do feel like you're embarking on a very long and winding road when you arrive at the airport. After all, you're told to be there so many hours before your flight to check in and clear security and then what?

Over in the UK, the current advice is to be at the airport two hours before short haul flights such as to destinations in Europe, and to be there three hours before long haul flights. So that means if we're heading to America, then we have three hours to kill before our scheduled departure time. I think it's fair to say that we've become veterans at dealing with long airport waits -- so how do we cope?

The first thing we do is to double check exactly how early we should get to the airport, as we always want to ensure that we're there in plenty of time. We don't want to be desperately running to the gate just as it closes, but you also don't want to spend any longer hanging around an airport terminal than necessary.

The next thing we do is work out how the check-in process is likely to work. It's easier than it sounds. You'll probably already know from the information you've had from your airline whether you can check in before you go to the airport. Usually, this is the process if you're traveling on an e-ticket and many airlines open up check-in up to 24 hours before your flight is due to depart, which means you can get that part all over and done with before you even leave home -- or your hotel at the end of your vacation.

If you don't have this option, then you immediately know to allow time to do it at the airport -- and as we all know, that could mean long waits in line to be checked in. That happened to us on our recent visit to Berlin and it was surprising how long the whole process took, probably around 40 minutes in total.

Even where you do have online check-in, you may still have to stand and wait in line anyway to check your suitcases in, although some airports have introduced facilities that allow you to weigh your own cases and print your own luggage tags, before you hand them on to a member of airline staff, which is exceptionally useful.

As well as allowing time to check-in, of course you need to allow time to

---

get through the security checks. It's worth having a look at the latest security restrictions in place and even the airport's own website, as security checks can vary from one airport to another. For example, some tell you to take laptop computers out of your bags, while others say it's not necessary. Then there's the shoe issue. In some airports in the past we've been told that all shoes must come off regardless, while others have told us that tennis shoes can stay on. Some airports, such as London's Heathrow, even do the checks on the shoes separately after the main security checks. You take them off and they pass through an X-ray machine in the same way as your hand luggage does.

Whatever the procedure, knowing what it will be ahead of time can help to speed your process through security -- and let's be honest, there's nothing worse than being stuck in line behind someone who has no idea of what they need to do and then end up delaying you. Some simple tricks can make things much easier at any airport. We always ensure that all metal is emptied out of our pockets before we get to security. We put it in clear plastic bags and place it in our hand luggage or perhaps it could go into your coat pocket, as outdoor coats go through the X-ray machine.

Liquids, of course, should already be in their own separate clear, one-quart plastic bag (only one per person!) and in containers that are three ounces (or 100 ml.) or smaller before you get anywhere near security. I still never cease to be amazed by how many people are caught out by this and how many people we've seen being forced to throw items away.

Once you're on the other side of security, the wait really begins. This is where we find that research beforehand comes in handy. We always check the airport web site to see exactly what shops, cafes and restaurants are both before security and after it. That way, we know what to expect and very often, I can usually spot some retail names that I'm interested in paying a quick visit to! Don't forget that if you're flying back home, there's usually some form of souvenir shop to be found somewhere at the airport, which gives you the chance to pick up any last minute keepsakes from the place you've been visiting. If you're flying back home on an international flight, it's also a good last opportunity to use up the last of your foreign currency before you leave. Equally, if we're going to need food before our flight (don't forget on some flights, you may have to pay for food and drink on board, so why not settle down, relax and eat beforehand?), then we try and identify places that we could try. Keep in mind how much time you're realistically going to have. Although airport restaurants understandably do have a very fast turnaround of tables, if you're short on time, a sit down meal may not be the best bet for you. It's also worth checking to

.....

see what Internet access is available at your departure airport and whether you have to pay for this facility or not. It's a useful way to spend your time as you wait for your plane to depart. Perhaps your airport even has an area where you can watch planes land and take off? Not only is it a great way of occupying children, it's also great fun for adults. Even with all our traveling, we never tire of that sight! Finally, don't forget that it could take some time to get to your departure gate. At large airports, you may have to take internal transport systems, usually light rail or perhaps buses, so be sure to factor that in. Some of the airports we've flown from in the past warn you to allow between 20 and 30 minutes getting to your gate. While we find that's usually slightly over-exaggerated, we always make sure to leave enough time. You don't want to be running for your gate at the last moment, afraid that it's about to close!

*About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)*

Article last updated: 5/8/2008

View the latest version online at:

<http://www.passporter.com/articles/what-to-do-while-waiting-for-a-flight.html>

Copyright by Cheryl Pendry. All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act. Resale of this guide is strictly prohibited without the copyright holder's permission. If you purchased this publication from someone other than PassPorter Travel Press, please call 877-929-3273.

View more PassPorter Articles online at <http://www.passporter.com/articles/>

---