

# How to jet-set without worrying about details

**Vince Egan**

Travel  
Thomson News Service

Flying is fine. Jetting from here to there is great. But it's the myriad details that cause so much stress in airline passengers.

The list of minor anxieties is almost endless - when to leave for the airport, whether to trust the cab driver, which queue to choose at the check-in counter, whether to ask for a window or an aisle seat, and so on.

Most of us work out our own solutions - through trial and error, or simply trust to luck. Not George Arthur Brown, a widely travelled 45-year-old U.S. lawyer.

Brown has anticipated every conceivable choice that might face an airline passenger and worked out a system for selecting the most advantageous approach. He tells all in his book, *The Airline Passenger's Guerrilla Handbook* (Blakes Publishing Group; 396 pages; \$17.95).

"From the moment you step out of your door to the moment you arrive at your destination, it's a constant battle," the author says.

"You've got to be on full alert every inch of the way... You've got to be tough. You've got to be clever."

## DEFINING TERMS

When selecting a long flight, Brown notes, you should always try to get a non-stop rather than "direct" flight. "Direct" used to mean that the airplane went directly to your destination, but now it may also mean a change of planes at one or more intermediate stops.

Another consideration when booking: At major airports, the big airlines usually have the most desirable gate locations, while secondary carriers may be at distant gates requiring a long walk.

If you can, avoid having to use airports at peak periods - Friday evenings, Sunday evenings, Monday mornings, the evenings beginning and ending holidays.

Most pleasure travellers are concerned about the cost of flying, since they are paying themselves (unlike the unconcerned business traveller, whose company pays).

So pleasure travellers should always try to conform to the restrictions that apply to the bargain fares, such as purchasing tickets well in advance and staying over at least one Saturday at the destination.

When all else fails, an expert travel agent may be able to persuade the airline to waive the restrictions in your particular case.

## GETTING THERE

Before setting out for the airport, always call the airline to see if your flight has been delayed or cancelled, Brown advises. (Such information isn't always depen-

dable, however. Departures said to be on time could well be delayed, while an anticipated 60-minute delay may prove to be only 30 minutes.)

Don't be intimidated by requests that you arrive an hour before departure time, Brown warns. "If passengers check in during a 60-minute period, airlines need only a quarter of the staff and facilities they would need if those passengers checked in during a 15-minute period. The airline saves money."

If you arrive after your flight has taken off - because of traffic congestion, for example - "many of the better airlines, as a matter of discretion, will let you use your non-refundable ticket to stand by for a subsequent flight on the same airline to the same destination," Brown says.

How much should you tip the porter for carrying your bags the relatively short distance from curb to check-in counter? About \$1 a bag, says the author, adding: "These porters must be pulling in \$100 an hour - and most of it unreported to the tax man."

## SIZING THEM UP

Once inside the terminal, you will want to turn in your ticket, pick up your boarding pass and check your baggage as quickly as possible. But, says Brown, the shortest line at the check-in counters may not necessarily be the quickest.

You can, he suggests, judge the speed at which each line will move by observing the people in that line. For instance:

- Travellers with only one bag are usually faster. They obviously have the ability to plan ahead and won't have last-minute problems.

- Inexperienced travellers are generally slower. They may not know the type of seat they want, or they may have packed away their tickets and travel documents. You might be able to identify them by their luggage - "plastic, brand new or of a monstrous size," according to the author.

- Avoid the line that has no check-in agent; he or she is probably off talking to a superior about the problem of the passenger waiting at the head of that line.

When two or more people are together, have each person stand in a separate line. The one who gets to the front first can check in the others.

If there are no passengers in line at a particular counter, go there even if the sign applies to first or business class - and you have an

economy ticket.

## BAGGAGE CHECK

Before you turn over your baggage to be checked, be sure to tear off any baggage tickets from earlier flights. If you don't, your bag could be sent to that earlier destination.

Always have a permanent, durable luggage tag on your baggage, showing your name, business address and telephone. Normally, there will be someone at your business address to receive messages about luggage in your absence. Besides, would-be burglars could be looking at luggage tags for addresses of homes whose owners are safely out of town.

As a back-up, tape your business address, telephone number and trip itinerary on the inside of your case.

Lock your luggage, not only to prevent its accidental or deliberate opening, but also to prevent drugs and other contraband from being put in without your knowledge.

Watch carefully to ensure that the check-in agent attaches the proper destination tag to your baggage, especially if you are making an intermediate stopover or if you will have to change planes to complete your trip.

Since 98 per cent of lost luggage is recovered within 48 hours, check only those items that you can live without for two days. Things that you will need immediately should go into your carry-on bag.

## TRAVEL NOTEBOOK

Here are notes on news of current interest to travellers:

- Norwegian Cruise Lines is offering discounts on three-day and four-day sailings of its 752-passenger Southward from Los Angeles to Santa Catalina Island, San Diego and Ensenada, Calif. The first adult passenger pays the full fare, while the second pays half the published rate. Minimum tariffs are quoted as \$473 U.S. or \$5.5 Canadian for the shorter sailing, and \$563 U.S. or \$698 Canadian for the longer, which indicates that Canadian passengers would save money by paying in U.S. funds bought at a bank. Details: 800-327-7030.

- "Want to play cowboy? In the first week of October, a three-day cattle drive for up to 50 greenhorns will be staged along the Red River in southern Alberta. Participants (not including the 250 head of cattle) will sleep in the Heritage Motor Inn in Brooks, and will have a barbecue each night. Price, from Calgary or Medicine Hat, is \$1,239. Details: 403-362-5855.

## TRIVIA

GREAT CHOCOLATE!



### Golden Drink

The ancient Aztecs considered chocolate such a prestigious drink that the golden goblets in which it was served were thrown away after one use, National Geographic reports.



### Slave Ruling

In 1857 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the Dred Scott case that a slave was not a citizen, nor was he automatically made free by virtue of temporary residence in a Free State, says National Geographic.

### Relocation

A Maytag Co. survey revealed that more than half of recent buyers put their washers and dryers in kitchens, bathrooms or even bedrooms, out of the basement.

### Miniature Volcanoes

At Los Alamos National Laboratory, which lies on the slope of one of the world's large extinct volcanoes, two researchers are creating their own volcanoes.

The model volcanoes are powered by a molten mixture of aluminum and iron oxide, which substitutes well for magma, or molten rock. Water, when introduced, completes the explosive combination.

Either small or large amounts of water will produce particles about an inch in diameter, but if the right amount of water—about one-third the amount of the molten mixture—is introduced, the resulting blast will produce a glowing dust cloud.

Information learned from these studies may help determine the origin of some atmospheric particles.

### Early Fishermen

"They that go down to the sea in ships" may have done so nearly 20,000 years earlier than is generally supposed, according to an archaeologist who has found evidence suggesting the use of seaworthy craft for fishing by early stone-age people.

Jon Erlandson, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California, Santa Barbara, found on Gibraltar skeletal remains of large, open-ocean fish in association with evidence of habitation in Gorham's Cave by habitation in peoples during the Upper Paleolithic period, around 28,000 years ago.



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