

**8. Currency.** Once you arrive at your international destination, avoid using cash or traveler's checks, and make maximum use of credit cards. Most cards will guarantee the best exchange rate possible at each use.



Finally, dealing in any currency involves exchanging money, which always involves a fee, and may not get you the best rate of exchange.



If you do have local cash on hand at the end of your trip, spend it. Trying to convert it to U.S. currency once at home is costly.

#### IMPORTANT WEB SITES: ↕

- U.S. Department of Transportation (202-366-4000)**  
[http://www.dot.gov/citizen\\_services/aviation/index.html](http://www.dot.gov/citizen_services/aviation/index.html)
- Fly-Rights: A consumer guide to air travel**  
<http://airconsumer.oost.dot.gov/publications/flyrights.htm>
- Travel Tips**  
<http://www.tsa.gov/public/display?theme=183>
- Department of Homeland Security**  
<http://www.dhs.gov>
- Permitted and Prohibited Items (for air travel)**  
<http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?theme=20&content=331>
- American Society of Travel Agencies (703-739-2782)**  
<http://astanet.com>
- Consumer Travel info from ASTA**  
<http://www.travelSense.org/>

**THIS PAMPHLET DOES NOT CONSTITUTE LEGAL ADVICE. STUDENTS WHO ARE CONFRONTED WITH LEGAL PROBLEMS OR WHO NEED SPECIFIC ADVICE ARE ENCOURAGED TO SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM A LICENSED ATTORNEY AT STUDENT LEGAL SERVICE.**

## STUDENT LEGAL SERVICE

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



## AIRLINE TRAVEL Passenger Rights

**STUDENT LEGAL SERVICE**  
324 Illini Union  
1401 West Green St.  
Urbana, IL 61801  
333-9053  
Office Hours: 8:30-Noon & 1-4:30pm, M-F  
<http://www.uiuc.edu/unit/SLS>

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Airline travel has changed over the last few years. Financial pressures and September 11<sup>th</sup> are the primary factors in turning the “friendly skies” into sometimes hostile territory. Passengers are largely on their own. This brochure will offer some suggestions for minimizing the risks of airline travel, in the hope that your experience may be as hassle-free and enjoyable as possible.

**1. Travel agents and agencies.** Traditional live travel agents are a disappearing breed, replaced by e-travel opportunities. In any case, the agent or vendor of tickets is not a true legal representative of any airline, but simply a broker of tickets. They bear no responsibility for what happens with the flight you book; their function is simply to provide you with a ticket.

**2. Your ticket means what it says.** If it is stated as non-refundable, don't try to cash it in. Tickets are never transferable. If you must reschedule a flight, it may be possible; however, there will likely be a fee involved. Further, your new ticket will have to be purchased at its current value, so any discounts which may have applied initially will be lost.

**3. Checking in.** Always allow plenty of time to check in, particularly at major airports. Two hours is advisable. You may find yourself with time to spare this way, but the alternative of getting stuck in a long line of passengers and missing your flight is far less appealing.



When checking in, you must present a photo ID, such as a passport or driver's license. Be sure that the name on your ID matches the name on your ticket to avoid additional delays. Also, if your name is very commonly used – John Doe, for example

– or is of a suspicious nature, you can expect further delays in receiving security clearance.

Airlines will limit your carry-on luggage to one piece plus a personal item such as a purse or briefcase. The carry-on must fit in the overhead storage, or it will be checked.

Both you and your luggage may well be searched. This can be done at the will of the security personnel – probable cause is not required. Always follow the rules as to what is and is not permissible to travel with.

Anything that can possibly be used as a weapon may not be carried onto the plane. This includes manicure scissors, nail files, corkscrews, and many other items.

Finally, no matter how absurd the process may seem, save your sense of humor for later. Wisecracks can get you arrested.

#### **4. Overbooking and cancellation of flights.**

Both are very common and can be extremely annoying. If a flight is overbooked, you may be involuntarily “bumped” from it and rescheduled. You may also offer to reschedule. In either case, you can expect some compensation from the airline, such as an upgrade to first class or a free ticket for future use. If a flight is cancelled, you have no real recourse but to wait for the next one.



**5. International travel.** Having a valid passport is your first concern. Apply for one at least 3 months prior to your travel plans. You will need a proper photograph and proof of citizenship along with the fee.



Passport photos are available at most studios; make sure that your photographer knows that this is what you need. Proof



of citizenship is either your U.S. birth certificate or naturalization papers. Passports may be obtained through the office of the Circuit Clerk or the U.S. Post Office.

**6. Visas.** Many countries require visas for entry. You are responsible for finding out if your destination requires a visa. Check with the Embassy for each country you plan to visit. See the Consular Information Sheets at:



[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html)

for a list of countries. Links provide information for that country's requirements for visitors

**7. Baggage.** On international flights, you are limited to 40 pounds of baggage per passenger. It may be possible to carry more, but you will be assessed a fee.

Loss of baggage as well as personal injury or death due to an airline is governed by the Montreal Convention. Basic advice to travelers is to declare the true value of your baggage at check-in; otherwise, your maximum compensation will be \$1,500.00.



Further, you must make a written complaint to the airline's headquarters within seven days of the loss, or you will forfeit your right to file suit to recover losses, leaving you in the hands of the airline. The notice should be sent by certified mail to prove receipt. Further information can be found at: <http://www.montrealconvention.org>

*(continued on reverse side)*

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