



Flying for the holidays? Remember these tips to ensure your trip is merry and bright!

INDIANAPOLIS—According to the Air Transport Association (ATA), an estimated 41 million passengers are expected to take to the nation's skies over the winter holidays, which it defines as a 21-day period from Thursday, December 17 through Wednesday, January 6, 2010.

This year, the three business travel days are expected to be December 27, 28, and 29, respectively. But industry experts expect an overall year-over-decline of about 2.5 percent compared to 2008 travel volumes. And since many airlines have reduced their capacity due to the ongoing economic downturn, planes will be full and passengers should pack a little patience in their carry-on bags.

With fewer flights, however, the nation's air space should not be overly congested during the winter holidays. The possible exception will be New York, since flights originating from or passing through the area's three major airports (La Guardia, Newark, and JFK) have some of the lowest on-time rates in the nation. Because a large percentage of the nation's flights pass through the NYC on any given day, delays in the Big Apple have a tendency to cause ripples elsewhere.

In general, flights should take place as scheduled, pending any winter storms and weather delays. Passengers should monitor the weather here in Indianapolis as well as the weather at any connecting city and their final destination.

To make holiday travel a bit easier, all passengers are encouraged to pack light, check flight status before leaving for the airport, and arrive early to allow plenty of time for check-in and security screening.

Other tips:

- Ensure the name you provide when booking your travel is the same that appears on the government-issued ID you will use when traveling.
- Know your airline's policies regarding fees, checked and carry-on luggage, cancellation policies, customer service plans, and flight alerts. This information can be found on the airline's Web site.

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- Do not wrap gifts before your trip because Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers might have to unwrap them for inspection. Wrap gifts when you arrive at your destination.
- Traveling with food like baked goods or wine? Although pies are permitted through the checkpoint, in general it is a good idea to ship food ahead, put it in your checked bag, or make or purchase your favorite holiday treats once you arrive. This includes gift baskets with food items like cheeses, jams, salsas, oils, and similar items.
- Snow globes are a no go! TSA does not permit snow globes in carry-on bags. They are, however, permitted in checked luggage.
- Follow TSA's 3-1-1 rule for liquids, gels and aerosols in carry-on bags when passing through security checkpoints. Lotions, shampoos, toothpaste, and other items must be three (3) ounces in size or smaller and stored in one (1) one-quart plastic zip-top bag. One bag per passenger may be carried on board the aircraft.

For complete details about permitted and prohibited items, travelers with disabilities or medical conditions, traveling with children, batteries, electronic devices, or special items (like musical instruments or ice skates), visit www.tsa.gov.

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