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POST TRAVEL



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10 Ways to Upgrade Holiday Travel

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Airline Travel Then and Now



Photo: British Air and Orbitz.com

Air travel can be a nightmare under the best of circumstances and the busiest travel day of the year is just weeks away. Between Friday, November 22 and Tuesday, December 3, an estimated 25 million passengers will fly, peaking on Sunday, December 1 when 2.56 million travelers will take to the air. This represents a 1.5 percent increase over last year, [according](#) to the industry trade group Airlines For America.

Who is the key demographic? According to the [US Department of Transportation](#), "travelers who begin trips during the holiday periods are younger than travelers during the rest of the year. The average age of Thanksgiving travelers is just under 34," as compared to an average age of almost 38 for travelers during the rest of the year--a statistic that is no doubt affected by so many children who are traveling to see their families.

We've all endured our fair share of stress from overcrowded, overbooked flights, security screenings, delays, and the myriad of other hassles that come with air travel--slow-moving lines,

screaming children, filthy restrooms, people sitting and lying on terminal floors like disaster victims.

Is there anything that airlines and airports can do to upgrade the travel experience? Yes there is! Here are 10 simple things that they can do now to make our journeys a little more comfortable and sane.

1. **Electrical outlets.** Everybody is mobile nowadays--but mobile devices need to be recharged. Go to any airport and you'll see passengers vying for outlets. Having connectivity while enroute is essential, so why haven't airlines and airports embraced this? Who knows? Until there is a more permanent solution, send a staff member out to a hardware store and purchase hundreds of multi plug chargers now. This isn't the 18th century!
2. **Wifi.** Free WiFi and even paid WiFi too often turns out to be a cruel joke. Airports need to make sure their WiFi system is high-speed and adequate to the demands of a large volume of users. This isn't rocket science. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this is the most basic but most airports still operate on the level of an AOL dial up connection from the 1990's. They need to up their game.
3. **Bean bags.** Children shouldn't have to play on the floors of crowded, dirty corridors. Why not buy a few bean bags and park them by the windows of each gate so children can squirm around, lounge with their devices and toys, and watch the planes take off and land without getting under everybody else's feet?
4. **Popcorn.** Airlines have stripped away the pretzels and nuts. If you do get a bag, it's doll-sized. Everyone loves going to the movies for the popcorn, so why not give travelers the same experience? Provide them with healthy, light, freshly-popped popcorn before they board their flights; it will lift their spirits and it won't make a dent in the bottom line.
5. **Helpful & friendly staff.** Most airline staff are overworked, underpaid, and yelled at all day; it's no wonder they are neither helpful nor pleasant when you need them the most. Have extra staff on hand so the lines to the gate agents don't get out of control.
6. **Wine.** And don't try to trick us with the cheap stuff, either. Airports should invest in more wine bars like Vino Vollo and offer passengers a restaurant quality selection once they're on board. If airlines are looking for more revenue, this is a no-brainer. A tasteful selection of wines from France, Italy, and California may be just the ticket to bring an airline back into the black.
7. **Lounge-style seating.** Wouldn't it be great if you could wait for your flight from what felt like the comfort of your living room. Over-sized sofas, coffee tables with interesting reading materials, and pillows to rest on could take a lot of the torture out of those three-hour delays.
8. **Healthy food options.** McDonalds, Chili's, Cinnabon. Disgusting!! We already have an obesity crisis in this country; airline travel is making it worse. Passengers aren't permitted to bring in their own liquids and if they're traveling internationally they're not allowed to bring most food across the border. At the very least, how about a fresh salad bar? Or fresh sandwiches--and

I'm not talking Subway here, but a real deli with quality ingredients. Anything that's not battered, fried, and processed.

9. **Disinfectant.** Everywhere you turn, someone is coughing, sneezing, or wheezing. Hand sanitizers such as Purell should be strategically located at every gate.

10. **Holiday cheer!** How about some warm cider and Egg Nog for the grownups and frothy hot chocolate, Santa Clauses, elves' workshops, and arts and crafts for the kids? And not just for Thanksgiving and Christmas but for other holidays throughout the year. There are so many potential volunteers in every community that would love to contribute to such efforts.

The travel experience doesn't have to be so miserable. Lighten up!

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