

Customs and boarding the plane

After the security check, the passenger is taken through customs, where the passport and the receipt for the possible passenger fee, also known as the airport tax (not included in the ticket price) are presented to the customs officer. Passenger fees are common in the developing countries.

As a rule, when you leave the country, customs are not as strict as they are when you enter the country. Customs officers are mainly concerned about you having been adhering to the time limit you have been permitted to stay in their country. Read more in the subchapter **Customs**.

In large airports your trip to the gate can take more than half an hour. You might want to keep this in mind as you are mentally scheduling that relaxing pint before the flight. And in some cases, there is an additional security check before you can enter the plane. The boarding gate usually opens thirty minutes before the take-off, but there is no need to rush to the front lines. The first ones

Survival Guide for a Long-distance Flight

- Always request a seat close to the emergency exit (more legroom and a quick way out should something go wrong) or from the next to last row in the plane (Many reasons, learn more in the chapter **Safety**).
- A window seat is the best option (Sleeping is easier as you can lean on the fuselage). Aisle seat is of course easier if you are planning a walkabout, have to use the toilet and so on, but it also means you have to get up every time when the passengers seated in the middle or by the window decide to take similar action. The middle seat is the worst draw especially in the row's middle block, which all larger passenger planes have in their seating plan.
- You can reserve a good seat well before the actual flight, if the airline you are using is up to modern standards. If you have not reserved a seat well in advance, it's advisable to do the check-in online a day before your flight. Hey, all's fair in love and air travel!
- The airport check-in counters usually open three hours before the take-off and after that passengers are labeled into two groups: the quick and the dead – at least when it comes to seating. You can try and complain about a leg wound, total exhaustion or some such reason, even ask them to block the seat next to you, if the plane isn't fully booked (If your complaint is related to your ability to move, they won't seat you by the emergency exit, though – to avoid any crash-panic induced bottlenecks, seats by the exit are reserved for the young and the spry). If you are traveling from a Christian developing country (e.g. southern Africa), donning a clerical collar might help some.
- Dress comfortably in loose clothing and shoes. Long sleeved shirt is always a good choice, since air conditioning tends to make planes chilly. Flight socks decrease swelling of the feet on the long passages.
- Pressure in the ears can be relieved by chewing gum. Buy the gum before you arrive at the airport – some airports refuse to sell gum, because they don't want people to

make a mess by sticking used gum wherever they please. If you have the flu or feel stuffy in general, the pain in the ears may be severe during take-off and landing. In this case, reserve nasal spray or lozenges to clear the pipes. Some flu medicines with antihistamines and pseudoephedrine will do the trick too!

- For other health related problems, always keep pills for heartburn and diarrhea and some painkillers handy in your money belt. Sleeping pills are not recommended during flight for their effects on general constitution but also because they may affect your ability to function in emergencies. If you are suffering from fear of flying or have trouble sleeping on the plane, a small dosage of sedative is okay.
- Take a walk every now and then to avoid numbing and stiffening. Do small exercises: stretch your arms and legs; roll your feet and shoulders. If you don't flex at all, the worst-case scenario can be a clotted vein.
- Don't drink and fly! Recommendation is that you shouldn't imbibe any alcohol at all, but of course one may feel the need to raise a toast or enjoy a couple of beers in order to celebrate the start of the journey.
- Drink **a lot of water** (but not carbonated). If the security check allows, bring your own for the plane service can be seriously slow. Make it a rule of the thumb to order extra water every time the opportunity arises. People tend to dehydrate during flight – read more from the chapter **Health**.
- Air conditioning also **dries the skin**, but a small tube of moisturizer can make that itchy and scratchy sensation go away. If you have a tendency for nosebleeds in dry conditions, carry moistening spray for your beak. Contacts should be removed willingly at the point of your departure and replaced with the old school specs.
- **Smokers** should reserve nicotine patches or nicotine gum along for the flight (Warning: may cause heartburn!) or snuff (the moistened powder kind you can purchase from Sweden – Indian Khaini is a viable alternative and it stores well too).
- **Food quality** on planes varies. When attending a long flight with a bad airline, bring provisions of your own: cookies, fruit and sweets. Vegetarian meals and other special regimen grubbs are commonly served first. When flying with Asian air carriers, the vegetarian food is usually the best bet, even if you are a habitual carnivore – just make sure to place an order for the vegetarian option in advance. Most companies offer meal choices on their longer flights. If you sit at the back of the plane, maneuver yourself into good graces of the flight attendants; you might be able to bum extra food and drinks easier.
- Dart to the toilets whenever possible. The after dinner traffic takes bloody forever to clear and drink-carts rolling down the aisle up the difficulty level of moving about.
- Store everything you can get **for free** and hustle for extras: auxiliary juice and water bottles, toothpastes, refreshing towels, footwear maintenance sets and so on and so forth – they are always useful and might even make for easy gifts or tips when the situation calls for it. Rip out the atlas from the airline magazine, so you can point out your place of origin from it on your travels. In shortage of a shawl, you can “borrow” a blanket from the plane (just remember to return it on the flight back).
- Earplugs, sleeping masks and inflatable travel pillows may help **getting sleep**.
- Those who suffer from **flight anxiety** might like to abstain from drinking. Instead, stock up on good music, reading and learn some relaxation exercises. Sedatives may help, but consult your doctor. If your fear of flying is severe, consider (often very expensive) therapy courses – usually organized by airlines.