

Airport Delays May Increase Risk of Crime According to The Safe Traveler

Website devoted to travel safety information reminds those passengers facing delays to take precautions to help ensure their safety.

For Immediate Release:

St. Petersburg, FL March 5, 2007 -- With increasing levels of traffic, delays are a fact of modern air travel. In fact in 2006, 22.6% of all flights were delayed and 1.7% were cancelled. That equates to nearly one quarter of all flights experiencing some type of delay according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics website: www.transtats.bts.gov.

Most airport delays are of a short duration. However the recent winter storms across much of the United States pointed out that for some, delays and cancellations can lead to significant travel disruptions. From Colorado to New England, tempers flared and frustrations grew as weary passengers dealt with cancelled flights and adjusted travel plans caused by the February storms. The most fortunate were able to return home or find accommodations at area hotels. The less fortunate were forced to deal with extended stays in the airport terminals.

Travelers experiencing delays can also unfortunately find themselves dealing with the fact they are victims of crime, despite the relative safety of airports, according to the travel safety website, www.SafeTraveler.com.

The confusion, fatigue and desperation caused by airport delays, particularly extended delays, can create an opportunity for criminals to prey on stranded passengers. Harried passengers may let their normal defenses lapse, increasing their vulnerability to petty crimes such as pickpocketing. Credit card thieves may find the confusion provides an advantage as travelers reserve hotels, cars, etc. over the telephone. Unscrupulous drivers and hotel operators may price gouge.

And it's not just "professional" criminals that can cause problems. A bag left unattended or with valuables exposed can create a tempting "crime of opportunity." Without proper precautions, victims of delays can easily become victims of crime.

Avoid Becoming a Victim

Fortunately the same common-sense steps you should take when normally traveling can help protect you from crime during a delay. The challenge is not letting the frustrations or fatigue caused by the delay lower your defenses. Here are a few tips from The Safe Traveler's website, www.SafeTraveler.com that can help keep you from becoming a victim of crime.

1. Don't assume that because you are in an airport you are safe from petty crime. The steps taken to ensure safe air travel can help ensure your overall safety but they are not focused on preventing petty crime such as pickpocketing or credit card theft.
2. Minimize the valuables you bring when traveling. Do you really need all the gadgets? The fewer you bring, the lighter your travel and the fewer opportunities for problems.
3. Protect your personal property. Keep bags, purses and wallets closed and with you at all times. If you're tired and need to nap, try using the bag as a pillow or keep your arm around it.
4. When using the restroom, keep bags and luggage in your line-of-sight.
5. If you're shopping or eating in a food court, avoid leaving items unattended, even to get-up and throw something away. If you must, keep the item in your line-of-sight.

6. If leaving the airport always use authorized transportation. If possible confirm rates prior to leaving.
7. Never leave personal items with others if you're going outside. While it may be a hassle to go back through the security screening, don't ask a stranger (even if they're from your same hometown or traveling to the same destination) to watch your bag.
8. If possible, store your items in an airport rental locker.
9. Use care when entering credit card information over a phone. Don't flash the card. Cover your hands if entering the numbers on the key pad or speak quietly if reading them aloud.
10. Keep your items in view when passing through security screening.
11. Try to use well-known hotels and confirm rates. Supply and demand may be factors in pricing (as well as making last minute reservations) but you should not expect to pay exorbitant rates just because you are stuck in a city due to a storm.

There may be little you can do to prevent being a victim of an airport delay but common sense and a few simple steps can help keep a frustrating situation from becoming a bad travel experience. Being a safe traveler means being a smart traveler.

The Safe Traveler provides travel safety information, travel tips, advisories, current travel updates, plus cultural and destination information on over 200 countries and thousands of locations. For more information visit www.SafeTraveler.com or contact:

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