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**Travel tips to get through TSA security**

**By Maxine Greco**

TIPS from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) will help get travelers on their way and will help speed travelers and their gear through airport security procedures.

Here are a few tips for traveling with golf gear since there is no better time than a vacation to hit the links. Fertilizers used on many golf courses can trigger explosive trace-detection equipment. Before flying, be sure to clean off clubs. Also remember to pack clubs in a travel bag and consider leaving it unlocked.

Vacations are also a great time to go scuba diving, catch some fish or go camping. Scuba tanks are not allowed on commercial airlines for safety reasons. Ship scuba tanks or consider renting a tank at your destination. Fishing tackle and sports gear – such as bats and lacrosse sticks – must be checked.

Outdoor enthusiasts will pack sun tan lotion, bug repellent and other skin care products. Usually, it is fine to pack these items in either checked or carry on bags, but travelers should check with their airline before flying with aerosol canisters as some canisters are flammable. Summer travelers who want to bring back favorite foods from their destination can do so, but should know that some food products might cause your checked bag to be screened for security reasons. And check prior to packing food items, as there are some restrictions on some fruits and vegetables. Pack food products in carry-on bags.

Use special TSA locks and locking straps only. It can be tempting to over pack bags when vacationing. TSA suggests that travelers consider how they pack and understand that Federal Security Screeners may have to open and physically search a bag as part of the screening process. Overstuffed bags are more difficult to close once opened which could result in delays for checked luggage. Also, small items won't get misplaced if you use plastic bags or special packing cubes made for this purpose.

Family memories last a lifetime, and so should photos and videos. Passengers traveling with underdeveloped film should pack these items in their carry-on bags. Checked baggage screening equipment will damage or destroy undeveloped film. Have your passport, boarding pass and photo ID

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readily available. Airport ID's are ideal for this purpose. Avoid over packing and carry one of those fold up carry bags for additional purchases. Check ahead of time with your airline or travel agent for maximum weight and luggage size limitations. Otherwise, you may be surprised with additional travel fees.

The following general packing tips apply to both carry-on and checked baggage and will help you to move through the screening process more quickly:

- Do NOT pack or bring prohibited items to the airport .
- Put all undeveloped film and cameras with film in your carry-on baggage. If your bag will pass through the X-ray machine more than 5 times ask for a hand inspection to prevent damage.
- Carry-on baggage is limited to one carry-on bag plus one personal item. Personal items include laptops, purses, small backpacks , briefcases or camera cases.
- Don't forget to place identification tags with your name, address and phone number on all of your

baggage, including your laptop computer. It is a good idea to place an identification tag inside your baggage as well Also have your passport, photo ID and boarding pass readily available.

Maxine Greco has worked in luggage and travel industry for over 35 years. She is now currently at Village Luggage & Gifts

### **Tips to make checking in you luggage a breeze**

#### **By Jawahn Thompson**

Now that even more restrictions have been placed on what can go in carryon luggage, more people are finding it necessary to check their luggage on flights. Unless you plan on purchasing all new toiletries after your plane has landed and abandoning them before you make your return trip, checking your luggage is the only way to make sure you've got everything you need on your trip. If you find yourself in the position where you have to check your luggage, here are some tips to make it as smooth as possible.

\* Once you've purchased your tickets, find out how many pieces of carry on luggage you can take with you and what they can weight. Often this can be found on your ticket or the confirmation you've received via e-mail or fax. If you can bring two pieces of luggage, somewhere you will see the code 2PC (or 3PC if you can bring 3 pieces of luggage, etc.). You will also see a weight specification in pounds or kilograms. If you can't find this information on your paperwork, contact your travel agent or the airline, and they should be able to give you the information.

\* Stay within the airline's allowance for baggage. If you are over, one of two things can happen. The airline can deny acceptance of your luggage, or more likely, they will charge you an overage fee when you are checking in.

\* Find out the three letter code of the airport that you are flying into. When the handler checks your

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luggage, make sure the correct code is being put on the tag that gets attached to your luggage. It's one small way you can help avoid having your luggage lost. Unfortunately, if you have a connecting flight, you can't check the next code on your luggage, but at least it will at least get to your first stop with you.

\* If you do have connecting flights, mention that to the baggage checker. It doesn't guarantee your luggage will follow you all the way, but at least the checker will be aware of what needs to be done with it.

\* Place your contact information on the outside and inside of each bag. Luggage tags are great, but they can get separated from your luggage. If you have your contact information on the inside of your luggage, it will be easier for the airline to match it up to you if the outside tags do get lost. It's a good idea to do this with bags you plan to carry on also, because you never know when you may be required to check a bag you planned to carry on.

\* Put something on the outside of your bag to easily identify it. Some people put colored ribbons on their bags to easily identify them on the baggage carousel. Using an identifier makes it easy to spot your luggage and will help keep others from picking up your luggage by mistake.

\* Guard the stubs from your checked luggage. If your luggage is lost, you will need them.

\* If your bag doesn't end up with you, report it immediately. Most bags do eventually get returned and the odds are even better if you report the lost bag(s) as soon as possible.

With the increased security for electronic items, many passengers may also be finding themselves forced to check their cell phones, MP3 players, PDA's, and laptop computers. This is a concern for

many travelers for two reasons. First they are concerned about their electronic equipment arriving at their destination in workable conditions. Second, they are worried about the theft of their devices, which could be disastrous, especially for business travelers.

If you know that you are going to have to check, you should make sure you have the proper cases to do so. Even if you don't think you will have to, recent events have shown that sometimes these items may have to be checked at the last minute. Your best bet is to pack them as if you were going to have to check them. Here are some tips on packing your electronic equipment safely.

\* For cell phones, MP3 players, PDA's and other small devices, make sure that you have a padded section of your luggage that you can slip them into. This could simply be in the middle of your clothing. If you are really concerned about it, carry some bubble wrap in your suitcase that you can slip the devices into before placing them in the middle of the clothing.

\* For laptops, the concern is much greater. Baggage handlers aren't known to be gentle with luggage, and a laptop is going to get thrown around often so choose a case carefully. You need a durable, lockable, hard case with high-impact foam. You should be able to drop the case from 4 to 6 feet with damaging the contents inside.

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A final concern for checked luggage is locking it. With today's security, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) may open luggage at any time to inspect it, even after it has been checked. This means that they can break open any lock at any time, and your luggage could be returned with a broken lock. If you don't want this, here's what you can do.

\* Purchase a TSA approved suitcase lock. They are combination locks that allow you to program a personal code to open them. They can also be opened by a key that TSA officials have. That way, the TSA can open your bag, check through it, and relock it. Anyone without the key or the combination cannot get into your bag. If the lock is opened with a TSA key, a security light changes from green to red alerting you that the lock was opened. Also, if the TSA does open your locked luggage, they are required to insert a slip of paper telling you they have done so.

Daily

air travel

is always on top of travel tips and destination information. I hope this article on luggage check in tips has been useful.



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