

5 Tips for Keeping Business Travel Simple and Stress-Free

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Back in 1977, I took my first airplane ride – internationally. The economy seats barely moved, and I sat in an aisle seat. Whenever the person on the inside seat wanted to get up, I had to get up. For 23 hours, there was nothing to do.

Fortunately, this isn't how business travel by plane works today, but airline travel still has its kinks. As a professional traveler, I've learned many strategies that can smooth out many of them.

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1. Prepare your wardrobe for worst-case scenarios

I once flew to Prague just before Christmas. The airline lost track of my bags. I could survive most everything as I was, but you can't survive winter in Prague without a hat. I got a really nice one made with fur from a wolf from Siberia. Apparently, my experience is common enough in that part of the world that people saw my hat, knew what had happened and forgave the rest of what I was wearing.

Since then, my wife and I have lost our bags many times. We finally decided to change our wardrobe to be completely multi-weather, business athleisure. Rain, cold, heat, exercising, meetings – we have all the tools we need to be professional and stay fit. Everything we bring collapses, works in layers,

rolls into small packages and doesn't have many creases when we pull it out to wear.

2. Get a sturdy but lightweight carry-on you can organize well

The last thing you want when you are pulling your suitcase through the airport is for the wheels on your bag to break. Investing a little more in something lightweight and durable that meets the airline's regulations is better. You'll be more comfortable, and if anything happens to your other bags, your carry-on can hold all the necessary items you need to get by.

Once you've got a bag that works well, taking five minutes to separate what's essential makes it easy to show personnel what you have. Your electronics, wires, toiletries and liquids should be easy for security to check. Being prepared means there is less chance of being pulled for a secondary bag check, or worse, your stuff going home with someone else.

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3. Do your research

If I go to London, what's the fastest way to get into the city from the airport? (I've learned it's the train.) Will the hotel send a car for you? (I know now that it can be expensive, but the cost can be worth it to avoid getting lost.) Get familiar with your travel destination so you know the basics of what to expect, and find out how you can handle the trip's logistics.

One area people often forget to research is what scams they might run into. In Stockholm, Sweden, for instance, many taxi drivers are freelance. They don't have the regulations you might be used to in New York City or other parts of the world. They will simply quote different prices – one driver might

charge you \$30, while another could charge you \$100.

4. Be prepared to go slow on language

Learning the spoken language of the country you are visiting isn't feasible. If you're in a country where English is not the primary language, I have found speaking slowly and using hand gestures is the best way to communicate. If you try to speak at your normal language speed, people may not be able to decipher you. Additionally, there are many easy-to-use digital language translators now that can help. I love gadgets, so I even plan to get one for my next trip. But communicating has never been a handicap.

In my experience of traveling to around 30+ countries, I've found it is rare for people not to find some way to communicate with me in English.

5. Stay rested, fed and hydrated

Most of the stress of travel comes from being hungry, thirsty and tired. To beat these common problems, I bring food with me – especially if I know I will not like what's available on the plane. We all know what they say about airplane food. I also buy sparkling water or use a refillable metal water bottle.

Once you've had some snacks and water, try to get some rest, if possible. No matter how long your flight is, a nap after you have had something good to eat or drink ensures you arrive refreshed and ready to go.

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It's not perfect, but you can make it much better

There will always be stressful parts of travel you cannot change – the airport may always be crowded, and a baby may always be crying, but you can greatly reduce your stress by being proactive in the core areas outlined above. Other strategies like taking advantage of frequent flyer programs to reduce cost, booking in advance, carrying a good quality noise canceling headset and using airline wifi to get a headstart on business, can also reduce tension and friction. Whether you are traveling for business or pleasure, preparation is key to ensuring a smooth and successful journey.

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