

‘Turn Left at the TSA Line’ and 8 Other Travel Hacks That Will Save You Time and Money

For even the most frequent traveler, tackling busy air travel can be an exercise in extreme patience and frustration. Having an arsenal of airport and airline flight hacks can be the difference between a smooth and turbulent journey.

So we spoke to Megan Gurgeon, founder of the Portable Professional, a popular YouTube travel vlog with 102,000 subscribers. Gurgeon has taken more than 300 flights and worked remotely from 50 countries, so she knows her way around airports and an airplane.

“My videos are all about helping travelers feel confident and capable so they can turn every aspect of their trip, from packing to airport navigation to the flight itself, into an enjoyable and stress-free experience,” she says.

Here are nine travel hacks to make your next trip cheaper and hassle-free.

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1. Turn left at the TSA line

Waiting in long lines to clear security can be a hassle. Some services allow for expedited airport security, such as TSA PreCheck or CLEAR, but they cost money and require you to complete a lengthy application beforehand. Savvy travelers know that another solution to avoid longer lines is to always turn left at the security checkpoint. Why?

“Most people are right-handed and tend to veer to the right

naturally. This means the left line might be shorter and faster,” Gougeon explains.

2. Don't buy water at the airport

After clearing security, many thirsty travelers feel compelled to buy bottled water at the airport to manage the dry cabin air – a big mistake. Thanks to a monopoly by certain water companies at airports, the cost of a 20-ounce water bottle can be anywhere from \$2.50 to \$5.

Gougeon suggests bringing a collapsable water bottle and filling it up for free at water fountains after passing through security. Another trick: You can ask the staff at Starbucks or one of the coffee shops to refill your water bottle.

3. Wear layers

What do you do if your carry-on luggage is too large or heavy to take on the flight? Gougeon recommends wearing heavier items on the flight and then stashing them away in an overhead compartment if you're too warm. Another hack is to pack an extra shopping bag in your luggage. Use it to carry additional items you must remove from your bag. Most airlines will let you board with a carry-on, backpack and shopping bag.

4. Mark your luggage as “fragile”

Putting a “Fragile” sticker on your luggage encourages baggage handlers to treat it more carefully. “This might also lead to your bag being placed on top of others, potentially resulting in it being among the first to come out at baggage claim,” Bougeon says.

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5. No power? No problem.

We've all been there. We get to the airport, and our phones or computers cling to 8% battery power. Most airport waiting areas have charging stations with USB charging ports. But what if you forgot to pack a charging cord, or it's in the bag you already checked? Gougeon recommends you head to the airport's lost and found. "Travelers leave their chargers behind all the time, and they probably have one you can borrow," Gougeon says.

6. Don't book an Uber or Lyft from the airport

"It's often more expensive to book an Uber or Lyft directly from the airport due to additional airport service charges. Walking a short distance from the airport before booking your ride can help you avoid these fees," Gougeon says.

7. Check these sites before you travel

According to Gougeon, you should check several sites before traveling to get the most bang for your buck.

- SeatGuru offers detailed airplane seating advice specific to the exact plane you are flying on.
- Sleeping in Airports is excellent for finding airport amenities, gates and the best sleeping spots.
- Expert Flyer provides real-time notifications on seat availability, which is especially useful for those looking to snag a more comfortable seat or wanting to monitor the availability of flights for potential changes or upgrades.

8. The best seats for working and sleeping

If you want to sleep, try a window seat at the back of the plane, Gougeon says. “It’s usually quieter and less crowded there, so you might get more space or even a whole row to yourself. Plus, the window gives you something to lean on.” She recommends picking the side of the plane that matches where you usually rest your head to sleep.

If you plan on working during the flight, Gougeon suggests an aisle seat in the middle of the plane. It’s smoother flying over the wings, and you can stretch your arms into the aisle to make working on your laptop easier.

9. Get access to airport lounges for cheap

Most major airline hubs in the U.S. have airline lounges that offer ample seating, plenty of desk space and free food, coffee and WiFi. Some even had showers and napping spots. However, access to these lounges can cost anywhere from \$99 to \$499 a year. Some credit cards offer complimentary or discounted lounge access, so double-check yours. Gougeon also suggests “looking for discounted lounge passes on online marketplaces like Facebook Marketplace and Craigslist.”

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