

BANISH TRAVEL BLUES: SOLVE ANNOYING ISSUES

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- 1) Vehicle renters, beware! Why are most rental car companies willing to hand over the keys to a \$40,000 vehicle without checking? I understand that the assumption is that you have a license, so you should know how to operate this machinery, and you want a fast and efficient vehicle collection. Still, with so much technology and different road rules- especially overseas- maybe a new set of standard protocols should be adopted as this is quite serious!
- 2) Cruisers, beware! How many travellers book a cruise cabin without considering the clientele on board, the port times, the exact cabin location, furnishings, noise factor, distances to specific ship amenities and the cabins' outside views? The longer the cruise-the longer the correct choice must be accepted. Engaging an experienced travel advisor to do the homework is critical, especially as the ability to change cabins on sold-out cruises or similar decks may be impossible.
- 3) The still prevalent onboard airline fluid policy is still stupid. But luckily, some countries /airlines are using logic! It is about time security departments woke up to the fact that this knee-jerk policy was useless and remains useless. I have never heard of the congregation of passengers onboard that multiplies the 100ml into more significant quantities.
- 4) Metal or Plastic or maybe both? Some Airlines were banning metal utensils from economy class cabins but leaving metal utensils in Business. First, class cabins or metal was still being used by Airline staff in the food Gallies > Maybe-just maybe- terrorists do not travel in Business and First class?
- 5) My Hotel ritual: After travelling for over 50 years, my simple Hotel room or Cruise cabin routine remains a constant today: I enter the room, quick walk around the room and the bathroom, venturing into the balcony area if there is one and noting the window security and door locking mechanisms. Then I grab some tissues, using tap water to moisten the tissues, and clean the remote controls, the light switches and the interior door handles. Then I make it a rule to rinse any cups I use with fresh tap or bottled water, ensure any bar fridge is complete or intact, and report anything untoward. I then activate any room safely, ensuring the safe is secured into a wall or base, not the "take-away" variety.
- 6) My flight ritual: My simple flight routine is to adjust my seat and seatbelt by inflight procedures, setting up my space to position whatever laptop or reading materials or iPod I want to access, but never any noise-cancelling headphones as this severely restrict any required action in case of an incident happening! In respecting my side passengers 'space" and letting them know that I want little rapport, I keep to my confined area and use my headphones, usually worn to create that zone of privacy with the volume on or off. Creating respectful space, silence, and serenity is a must for me.

- 7)** My arrival Immigration and Customs common sense: I like to look ahead of the usually long Immigration and Customs queues and consider the customs applicable to the country I am entering. If I consider many locals are in a line and I am allowed to join them, I do so. I join another bar if I see many foreigners with “interesting” habits, dress standards, or large-scale fiddling for documents. If I am allowed to use Express Lane, I do so quickly and hope to get an efficient path through. Predicting who is in front of me is a tricky guess, but you get the hang of it as each country and airport’s formality, flight personnel, and standards differ. Time is essential, so I try to negate issues without running or rushing.
- 8)** The imbalance of the travel industry business equation. I always find it peculiar, or maybe the word is pathetic, that some travellers are willing to pay \$150 for a tradie call-out fee that may involve no actual work-just an opinion but sometimes scoff at the idea of investing a similar amount towards a professional travel advisor who can make or break their travel plans, save them time, save them money and who accepts legal responsibility for what they say, what they book, what they do whilst providing, in many cases 24 x 7 constant backup human services, but not charging huge call-out fees or rates per 15-minute 15-minute block as most tradies do! Go figure. (This business equation is even worse if you use the same logic comparing Lawyers, Accountants and others!)
- 9)** Blaming the innocent happens in the travel Industry often: I hate it when an Airline or any supplier blames “the travel agent” or: the travel advisor” when they are not present to defend themselves, only to discover that the issue or problem was not their fault but the fault of the Airline or a suppliers staff or computer error or a third parties staff inaction or incorrect servicing. It happens far too often and can cause initial grief and blame without justification.
- 10)** How annoying is it when a number means nothing? I cannot understand it when somebody communicates with me or my office and says things like, “ see you on the 21st ...” or I want to leave on the 21st....”. THE 21ST OF WHAT ! What month? What day is the 21 st ? Or when most TV stations advertise to “Watch this program at 9 O’Clock! Is that AM or PM? Unspecific use of times that annoy me daily.
- 11)** When Qantastic is not Fantastic, I remain disappointed that our national Airline did not freeze their Executive Salaries and bonuses during COVID and did not secure monies to pay for their sub-staff to maintain their jobs rather than deliver hot-air empty speeches whilst the Travel industry and their staff lost jobs, lost lives and lost their business. Many Executive salaries were unworthy, mainly when travel agents deliver over 73% of International sales to them and were instrumental in assisting efficiently most COVID-affected clients – without being paid any revenue. To boast about huge profits and not truly support quality Qantas staff and the supporting travel agents is hugely inappropriate and unjust.
- 12)** Pack your bags. Never let a 5-star Hotel or resort or whoever pack your bags, as some Hotels and resorts still offer this service as part of their “concierge” free services. Packers beware! Customs will always place your onus on the contents if ever busted! Nice offer but no thanks!
- 13)** The best travel industry travel writers and media reporters understand the mechanics and politics of the travel and tourism industry. They are not blinded and become biased by kickbacks, travel offers, or travel industry FOC offers or discounts that can cloud their accurate opinions or commentary. Good writers and reporters tend to be candid and honest, which travel industry professionals respect and stay connected with. The (many) writers who keep on referring travellers to “online” reviews” or “...blogsites” or advise travellers “..to google the answers” are usually inexperienced and lack any understanding of the worth of bouncing questions into the laps of AFTA or a professional travel agent who live and breath what is being asked. It is no wonder that journalism has become an eroded and less quality-endorsed form of communication.

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