

TRAVEL TALK

BY CHASE BINDER

TAKE THE BUS AND LEAVE THE WORRY TO

Bud and I love a bargain. In fact, getting "senior" discounts was one of the things that helped take the sting out of heading into our 60's and (horrors!) 70's. Of course discounts that allow us to stretch our travel budget further are the best. That's why I was thrilled to find that the Boston Express bus to Logan Airport offers half-price fares for those 65 + on some (not all) scheduled service from Concord, Londonderry and Salem to Logan and South Station.

We have used the "new" Londonderry bus terminal just off Exit 5 on 93 South to make connections to Logan for several years. Long term parking is free. The terminal is spotless, comfy, has great restrooms as well as free hot coffee, and opens well before dawn--3:45 AM and sometimes earlier. You can catch one of several buses that will get you to Logan.



You can also book services like Flightline (flightline.com) to meet you right in front of the terminal if you need to arrive at Logan super-early--say for a 5AM flight--and the terminal isn't open yet.

The trick is to read the fine print and check your outbound and inbound flights to make sure the timing works. Half-price fares for seniors work on some schedules--all weekend service, but only select service on weekdays and generally those schedules that fall outside of the regular business commutes to Boston. After all why sell a half-price ticket

when you know the bus will be full of regular-fare paying customers? Visit bostonexpress-bus.com for details and read the new (October 25th) schedule very carefully. There have been some changes!

In our case, we had a 6 AM Saturday morning outbound flight and an 8:30 PM inbound flight three Saturdays later. I looked at the schedule and found a bus that would get us to the airport at 5 AM in plenty of time, considering we check in online the day before and are TSA Pre-Check, so can breeze through security. The bus starts drop-offs at Terminal A, so we would likely get to Terminal B at 5:05 or 5:10 at the latest.

For our return, we were scheduled to arrive at Logan shortly after 8 PM. That left 3 busses still going to Londonderry before the service stopped for the day. Again, plenty of time and plenty of back-ups if we got delayed. As usual, we did the math. With free parking and two senior tickets, we could do our ground transportation and parking for a total of \$33 for

both us--for a three week trip to St. Maarten. Now *that's* a bargain! In our case, though, the price of that bargain was a bit of unanticipated stress. The bus was actually about 15 minutes late--schedules are estimates and arrival times can vary according to weather, traffic and such. This is not a train in Switzerland! When we went to check our bags 40 minutes before departure, the agent told us we had missed the airport's 45 minutes "baggage check cut-off." Huh? Something new to worry about! In the end the American agent accepted our bags and we made the flight, but also had a lesson learned. We need to start scrutinizing airline websites for baggage check cut-offs. Who knew? We also need to allow more time at the airport. Next time, if I'm going to pair an early Logan departure with the early bus and save all that cash, I won't book an outbound flight any earlier than 6:30 AM or so.

Really...who wants to start a vacation with stress??