

TRAVEL TALK - BOOKING AIR TRAVEL IN THE WINTER

BY CHASE BINDER

The foliage this year has been swoon-worthy. Indeed, the folks who measure factors like color vibrancy say it's the best in seven years. But make no mistake, winter is coming. Ice. Snow. Bitter cold. All of which can add an almost unbearable level of stress to the no-longer-fun-at all world of air travel. That's the bad news. The good news is that there are a few things you can do to decrease your chances of encountering a disaster.

Most important, book your itinerary carefully. No matter where you're headed—warmer climes to the south, our own west coast, Europe, even Oceania or South America—the important thing is to get in the air on time. And no matter whether you're flying out of Manchester-Boston Regional Airport (MHT) or Boston's Logan Airport (BOS), this means booking the very first flight of the day possible. Why? The aircraft will already be there—no waiting for an inbound aircraft which has had lots of time to get embroiled in scheduling delays elsewhere. Airlines work hard to begin their days on time, so will park the last inbound aircraft of the night right at the gate for the next morning's (hopefully) on-time departure. Equally important, if the



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first flight has a problem, the airline has all day to fix it and get you on your way.

Book non-stop whenever humanly possible. Airplanes can take off in dodgy weather a lot easier than landing in snow and sleet. Once you're in the air, a nonstop is virtually guaranteed to get you to your destination on time. Given airline consolidations, nonstop options have diminished somewhat. You might have to drive to Boston to catch a nonstop JetBlue flight to the Caribbean. Spirit has non-stops out of Boston to several points in

Florida, and Allegiant has non-stops out of Pease to locations on both Florida coasts. Southwest has non-stop to Orlando and Tampa out of MHT. Beware, though, savvy travelers grab non-stop seats early.

But sometimes non-stops just won't work. In those cases, look for an itinerary that connects in an airport as far south as possible. If you're flying American, choose Charlotte rather than Philly. Delta will often route you through their hub in Atlanta. I try and avoid United, which often routes through Newark. Think about it—weather systems hit us from the west and big ones can stretch for hundreds of miles. Chances are good that a big storm affecting New Hampshire will be causing havoc all the way down to DC.

No matter where you're connecting, allow lots of extra time to make that connection. Much better to relax at the gate waiting for your onward flight than to miss the connection and risk your entire trip. Speaking of missing an entire trip, if you are headed for a cruise or a tour, build in an extra day or two on the front end. They *will* leave without you if you're not there on time!

Once you've booked, it's critical to monitor both weather (just

turn on your TV) and air traffic as your departure approaches. I always monitor the inbound flight. This is easy to do by searching the airline website for arrivals. Match the airline, gate number and time with your outbound flight and, bingo—you'll be able to find the inbound flight and you'll have advance warning of delays. I use flightaware.com, which often has more accurate and up-to-date info than airline's own website. Another website that has great air traffic info is fly.faa.gov, which will show you which airports are experiencing delays—and even the reason behind the delays...weather, traffic, whatever.

Of course, even if you've done everything possible to protect your travel, things can still go bad—sometimes for weather, sometimes just the bad luck of a mechanical failure or a distant scheduling problem that has a domino effect on your flight. Here is where information is power. If you're one of the first to know, if you have cleverly put the airline's contact info on your cell phone's speed dial, and if you've been smart enough to keep your phone fully charged (always travel with a battery-powered portable charger), you'll be among the first to grab alternate seats.

TOWN PROJECT STATUS REPORT

Public Safety Building Project Status

- Exterior walls have gone up and roof trusses are being installed and the site is beginning to shape up.
- Two carpenters were injured when two roof trusses that were being installed fell. Neither injury was severe and work on the project continues.
- FairPoint has set three new utility poles on Knox Road in order to relocate the utilities away from the driveway entrance. Unitil is in the process of moving their power lines over to the new poles. FairPoint will then move their wires and then Comcast.
- The base for the 125' communications tower has been poured and made ready for the installation of the tower.
- The contractor and Town staff are working with the contractor to finalize interior data drop locations, door swings, door locations and other details.

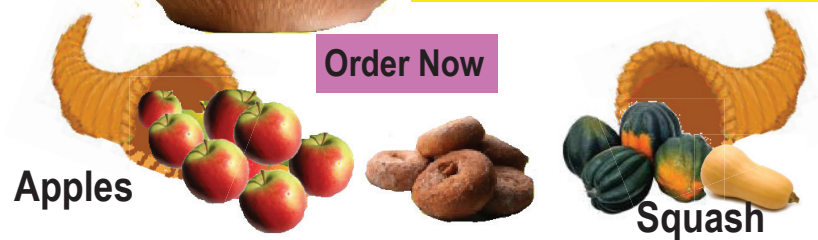


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