

## AAA Corporate Travel Newsletter

January 15, 2010

### What you need to know about latest airport security rules

Here's the good and the bad news, airline passengers: Rumors of long lines in the US are generally not true, and the brunt of new security standards are almost entirely being borne by international passengers arriving here.

"Based on reports from our international customers, there have been longer lines there. But domestically, we really haven't heard from airports about significant line waits," said Christopher Bidwell, vice president of security and facilitation for Airports Council International.

Long-term effects of the Detroit bombing incident are still being sorted out and who knows what the TSA will be coming up with next? But in the meantime, here are some basics you need to know now:

- International passengers, whether US citizens or not, will be seeing more pat downs and random screenings as they come back to the US. This might include choosing "random" passengers at the boarding line having their contents of their carry-ons put on public display.
- Passengers returning from another country to the US will face two security checks. The first is when checking in for the flight at the airline counter where they may be frisked and questioned by the airline. The second stop is at airport security checkpoints with random screens. Additional checks may be required at the departure gate.
- Canadian airline officials have been among the most aggressive in new screening techniques and as of this writing, they are banning carry-on luggage except for purses and laptops for flights leaving Canada for the US. Will this change? Probably.
- British Airways tells travelers inbound to the US from the UK are restricted to a single carry-on that must conform to normal size standards. Purses and briefcases will have to be placed inside carry-ons. Again, this could change.
- Passengers everywhere will be seeing more frequent use of full-body scanners at the upwards of two dozen US airports where they are in operation. More international airports are adding the screeners and that will continue.

Further good news for international passengers: This is the slowest travel period of the year so experts say huge delays and long lines are not routinely expected.

*TravelMole.com, January 14, 2010*

### TSA plan skips many checkpoints

The Transportation Security Administration's plan to install body scanners at hundreds of security checkpoints still could leave many U.S. airports inadequately protected against terrorists carrying explosives, aviation experts say.

The TSA plans to install 300 machines that look under passengers' clothing for hidden weapons. That will leave about 500 checkpoints at U.S. airports without the technology, raising concerns that terrorists would choose a checkpoint with a metal detector to sneak plastic or powder explosives past security.

"It's just too easy for a terrorist to know where the technology is fielded and where it's not and to make modifications accordingly," said Richard Bloom, head of terrorism and security studies at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Arizona. The body scanners, used in 19 U.S. airports, are about 10 feet tall and easily visible from public areas.

Another potential weakness is that TSA policy allows passengers to refuse to go through a body scanner search, provided they agree to undergo a pat-down by a TSA officer.

"There is a limit to how far screeners will go looking underneath someone's bra or digging around someone's crotch," former Homeland Security Department inspector general Clark Ervin said. Scanners should be installed "at every airport and every checkpoint," he said.

The Nigerian man accused of trying to blow up an airliner over Detroit on Dec. 25 hid powder explosives in his underwear as he went through security at Amsterdam's airport, according to the charges against him. Ervin said that after the alleged bomb attempt by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the TSA should "do away with the option" of passengers bypassing body scans.

TSA spokeswoman Kristin Lee said the scanners improve aviation security and are effective in conjunction with other equipment and tactics. "They don't stand alone," Lee said.

Wednesday, a key lawmaker urged the Obama administration to buy more than the 300 scanners it plans to install this year. "The American public appears ready and willing to undergo more intensive security screening," Rep. Nita Lowey, D-N.Y., a senior member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, wrote in a letter to President Obama.

The TSA modifies some scanners to create slightly blurred images that protect passenger privacy. RAND security analyst Brian Jenkins said those scanners may miss small amounts of explosives. "It's not clear that would have been readily apparent on a body scan," Jenkins said of the 80 grams of powder Abdulmutallab allegedly carried.

Lee said the machines "are very effective at detecting a wide array of threats, including explosives."

*USAToday.com, January 14, 2010*

## Continental raising domestic baggage fees

Effective for tickets purchased on/after January 9, 2010 for travel on/after January 16, 2010, Continental will increase the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> domestic bag fees (including Canada). All other rules, restrictions and exemptions remain the same.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Bag Fee

- Online rate - \$23.00
- Airport rate - \$25.00

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Bag Fee

- Online rate - \$32.00
- Airport rate - \$35.00

*Continental.com, January 11, 2010*

## United Airlines matches baggage fee increases

United Airlines joined the latest round of baggage-fee increases on Wednesday. The move follows hikes by Delta and Continental.

United said it will now charge \$25 to check the first bag and \$35 for the second. That's \$5 more than it charged previously. It takes effect on tickets bought beginning Thursday for travel after Jan. 21.

The new fees are the same at Continental and Delta. Airlines discount the fees by a few dollars for travelers who pay online in advance instead of at the airport.

The Delta fee began on Tuesday for tickets purchased starting Jan. 5. Continental's higher fee takes effect for tickets purchased Jan. 9 for travel beginning on Saturday.

American Airlines has not changed its fees, spokesman Tim Smith said, but they're studying the moves by the other airlines. Southwest Airlines does not charge to check the first two bags.

Baggage fees began in 2008 and add hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue for the airlines that charge them. US Airways Group Inc. said on Jan. 6 that it took in about \$400 million from add-on charges including baggage fees in 2009.



They're still losing money, though. Of the six biggest airlines, analysts expect a profit for 2009 only at Southwest – the only carrier that doesn't charge baggage fees.

*Earthlink.net, January 13, 2010*

For current baggage policies and ticketing rules for legacy carriers, please visit our website at <http://aaacts.com/resources.html>.

## Car rental prices buck trend: rates went up last year

Travel deals were unprecedented last year but not when it comes to car rentals. They skyrocketed.

The average weekly published rental rate (including airports) for a compact car was \$335.05 in 2009, up 51 percent from 2008, according to Abrams Consulting Group, a Purchase, N.Y., rental-car consulting firm.

Rates will continue to rise in 2010, though at a slower pace, says Neil Abrams, president of the consulting company.

Why?

Rental companies significantly reduced the number of cars they own – their fleet size – giving them leverage to raise prices, according to The Wall Street Journal.

The result: car rental companies were able to raise prices.

Rental-car companies are expected to increase fleet sizes gradually as demand increases in 2010.

*TravelMole.com, January 12, 2010*

## Amtrak to add Wi-Fi to some trains, free for now

Amtrak will offer wireless Internet service on the high-speed trains that ferry passengers along the busy Northeast corridor, in another bid to lure business travelers away from the airline shuttles.

Wi-Fi access will be available starting in March on Acela trains traveling between Boston, New York and Washington, says Amtrak spokesman Cliff Cole. Initially, the service will be free.

The Acela express service gets passengers from New York to Washington in two hours, 50 minutes – 30 minutes faster than a regional train. Wi-Fi access can make time fly faster and lets travelers peruse the Internet longer than if they're on a short flight and have to log off for the rides to and from the airport.

Amtrak also plans to add Internet availability to Northeast regional trains, Cole says, and to eventually offer it beyond the East Coast.

By offering Wi-Fi on some of its Northeast runs, Amtrak is moving onto turf that's been dominated by Delta. Delta began offering Internet access on some domestic flights in December 2008. For the Northeast shuttles, and other flights under 1½ hours, the charge is \$4.95. The price goes up to \$12.95 for trips that are three hours and longer, says spokesman Paul Skrbec. For mobile devices, the price is \$7.95.

By the end of June, Delta expects to have more than 540 aircraft equipped with Internet access. Although other airlines are adding Wi-Fi access, Skrbec says Delta has the largest Wi-Fi-enabled fleet in the world.

*USAToday.com, January*

