

AIR TRAVEL

You've made all your travel arrangements, your neighbor's all set with a key to get in and water your plants. All that remains is to pack your bags and show up at the airport. Before 2001, this meant just stuffing your bag the night before and getting yourself to the gate. Now, all carriers with a departure or landing point in the U.S. randomly select a percentage of each flight's passengers for vigorous security screenings. Casual and careless packing won't do.

Here's a quick rundown of what to pack in an accessible manner and what not to pack, to make your air travel experience smoother and less stressful. Remember, everything on your person or in your hand is scrutinized before boarding. Checked luggage is screened as well.

When you've booked your air travel tickets, check with the airline for its carry-on luggage size requirements. There's no negotiating here.

Ordinary items for air travel transportation become extraordinary in the eyes of a security inspector. Toiletries in gel, liquid or aerosol form must be packed in containers of 3-ounces or less. All the individual containers must fit inside one clear plastic, quart-size zippered bag. If your 3-ounces of shampoo are in a 4-ounce container, or you've used a gallon bag, out it goes in the trash! Be prepared to pull these items from your bag at the security checkpoint for a separate inspection through the x-ray machine.

Toiletries are easily obtained almost anywhere in the world, consider buying upon arrival at your destination. This also saves cleaning up the foams and liquids that may douse the contents of your bag under cabin pressure during air travel.

If you're carrying change in your pocket or jewelry items, pack these in clear plastic bags for easy inspection and save yourself a hassle. If you're carrying medications, stash these separately in your carry-on and ask for a visual inspection, unless you don't mind them being x-rayed as well.

Security now requires that shoes be x-rayed as well, so choose a slip-on pair for air travel. When taking young children, fold up that stroller as you approach the security checkpoint and bag the basket contents separately.

Some common items are always on the air travel no-fly list. Scissors, metal nail files, clippers or even knitting needles are forbidden and will be tossed by security. You can buy these items on arrival. You'll free up valuable packing space by simply eliminating them from your packing list. Leave the kid's toy

knives and guns at home too.

For the most up-to-date complete list of items that are inspected or forbidden, check the government website at <http://www.tsa.gov> for guidance. You'll save time, hassles and be better prepared and less stressed for your air travel!