

* 7 Tips for Air Travel with Gear *

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1) Disguise your gear.

You don't want your bag to scream "Expensive photography equipment inside!" so make sure it looks like any other bag—or, make it look worse (*perhaps you can even have a bit of fun making it look "extra" undesirable*).

Cover up or remove any easily recognizable logos like "Canon" or "Nikon." A bit of black electrical tape works well.

2) Invest in the right bag.

When it comes to photography, seems you can spend money endlessly, but I discovered through lots of experience that having the right bag for your gear constitutes money well-spent. And it's even *better* money well-spent when the bag has wheels and your "personal item" bag (*e.g. your camera backpack or laptop case*) has heavily padded straps.

With that said, always double-check that your flight won't be on a commuter-sized plane requiring you to check in that carry-on bag!

3) Bring only what you need.

Find out the carry-on weight allowance and work backwards from there. If you're *really* organized you can keep a list of how much each piece of equipment weighs and tally it up as you pack (*beginning with the weight of your bag, of course*).

Think in terms of what you'll *primarily* photograph rather than what your secondary subject will be and pack accordingly. If you're not sure, ask your photo-tour operator what equipment he/ she recommends.

4) Carry on all but the tough stuff.

Lugging your gear around as carry-on can get tiring so, after a while, checking it in might get tempting. When temptation arises, watch workers load and unload luggage from a plane; that should re-convince you to check-in only your toughest stuff (*such as your tripod and head*).

5) Prepare for security.

As you prepare for security open camera cases and any other equipment bags to make everything visible. That minimizes handling of your sensitive gear by curious security-line personnel.

And don't worry about memory cards; simply traveling through the conveyor belt won't hurt them.

6) Get on first.

When making reservations request a seat near the back of the plane as these rows normally board first. (Note: *More and more airlines now board aisle seats last no matter what the seat number is, so it's best to check with the airline when booking.*)

Now that airlines charge for checked-in bags, passengers tend to push the "carry-on" limit to the limit! That makes overhead-bin space not only tough to find, but tough to procure close by. With thousands of dollars' worth of equipment inside, you definitely want your bag not only safely secured but secured in sight.

7) Don't forget to pack a change of clothes.

Remember to carry-on a change of clothing (*and a toothbrush!*) in case your checked-in luggage doesn't arrive when you do. In doing so, think in terms of what you can "pack" into the clothing you're wearing.

Of course, you don't want to fly uncomfortably, but if, for example, you travel wearing a photo vest use it to store items that would take up other carry-on space.

A clean T-shirt fits into a large pocket (*and doubles nicely as an appreciated small pillow or arm-rest padding on a long, international flight*).

Award-winning nature & wildlife photographer, Jeff Parker, leads photo tours & workshops for the naturally curious™ throughout North & South America. Join him!

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