



Flight Delayed but not Afraid

Survival techniques for the traveler whose flight is delayed, diverted or discontinued

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As stock prices continue to become the objective and not the indicator, expenses are being slashed at every opportunity. In the past 24 months, more and more flights are being cancelled due to ground and in flight maintenance issues, causing more travelers to spend more time in places they did not plan on visiting. This issue shows an increase in maintenance incidents causing transatlantic flights having to land and house passengers under the most austere conditions. The frequency has increased to the point that some airlines maintenance practices require special attention from the FAA. Once on that plane, most travelers may feel they are totally dependent upon the airline for even the most basic life support. By planning ahead and understanding the various types of survival situations with which you may be faced, you can maximize your personal comfort, regardless of the situation.

Traveler Survival Situations

There are a variety of reasons that may prevent you from arriving at your intended destination at the intended time. Some may cause delays of several hours, others several days. The timing of the delay is compounded by the type and amount of supplies and services available on the aircraft. Perhaps the most significant differences in traveler survival situations is whether or not you are able to deplane and whether or not you will have access to your checked luggage. This gives us three separate environments we want to discuss:

- Onboard Survival.
- Terminal Survival with carry on
- Terminal / Austere Survival with checked bag

Traveler Survival Basics

The basic strategy for survival states you can live for three hours without shelter, three days without water and three weeks without food. While there are no recorded situations, outside of remote crash landings, that show passengers going without shelter. We can learn from this doctrine however and apply it not just to our sustainability but our health and ultimately our personal comfort in an otherwise uncomfortable situation. These Survival Basics include:

- What do I need to remain alive?
- What do I need to remain healthy?
- What do I need to remain comfortable?

What to Expect

While the US Department of Transportation has imposed a set of “Travelers Rights” there are provisions to supersede these rights. Moreover, these rights only apply to US flights and have no jurisdiction over international flights. These rules include:

- Airlines must return to the gate and let passengers off if a flight is sitting on the tarmac for three hours.
- Airlines must provide passengers with adequate food and water within the first two hours.
- Adequate toilet facilities must be maintained and made available to passengers during the delay.

My Survival Kit(s)

A recent flight to Australia found passengers on a 777 for over 30 hours straight, with the last 19 being without any additional food or water. While this is perhaps the most extreme case in the last 24 months and it was

compounded by legal and customs issues, the savvy travel survivor should plan on being onboard for an additional 6 hours for US flights, 12 hours for local flights outside the US and 24 hours past the scheduled flight time for international flights. So what should we consider? What must we have in our carry on? What can we replenish in a terminal? What do we need in our checked baggage for the most austere conditions.

- ❑ What do I need to remain alive? As the aircraft itself will provide you with basic shelter from the elements such as wind, rain and temperature, let's focus on some other essentials.
 - Water is perhaps the most important resource besides shelter in any type of survival situation. Plan on at least one liter for every 12 hour period you will be on the plane in excess of the scheduled flight time. This puts your survival kit needing between ½ and 2 liters of water.
 - Prescription Medications. Ensure that you have enough medication to cover your survival planning times as stated above. Further consider medications requiring special handling such as remaining cold or cool, injectables etc.
 - Other medical conditions that may threaten your life. From peanut allergies to blood clots in your legs, make sure you have a plan to self-respond to these situations, should they occur.
- ❑ What do I need to remain healthy? This section will always be more personal the first. As each traveler has their own version of personal maladies, it is important that you understand your needs and ensure that you are prepared to meet them on your own.
 - Perhaps the greatest health hazard in a traveler survival situation is insufficient bathroom facilities. While sadly, this directly conflicts with the need for water, this is the number one challenge during any disaster to human morbidity.
 - A face mask to block virus and bacteria
 - An exercise plan to prevent blood clots in your legs
 - OTC Drugs. While some of these may fit into the comfort category, consider carrying something for each major body part. Pain reliever, decongestant, antihistamine, aspirin, antacids and an anti-diarrhea medication
- ❑ What do I need to remain comfortable? Some may consider this to be “calm” or “entertained” as well. Let’s look at some of the possibilities.
 - Temperature control. Do you dress so you can remove layers to cool off or add layers to stay warm? Perhaps the best item to stay warm is a light polypropylene sheet or blanket tucked in your carryon bag. Keeping your head cool typically cools the rest of the body. Wipe your head with water occasionally to allow the evaporation to help cool your head.
 - Ergonomics. A 250 lb man sitting in a seat made for a 120 person is never fun, sitting there for an extra 12 hours is horrific. Consider items such as neck braces for sleeping and soft foldable slippers so you can kick off your shoes.
 - Something to read, something to watch, something to listen to. These can all be done on a smartphone, tablet or similar device. The challenge is how do I keep my electronics charged? Consider carrying extra batteries, USB charging devices or even solar chargers.

Under the Most Austere Conditions

We have seen planes land in austere conditions that have placed passengers in near survival situations. There is also the possibility of your plane actually conducting an emergency landing off of an approved airport, placing you in a true survival mode. When considering what to place in Traveler Survival Kit that goes in your checked bag, consider the following from Dave Canterbury and his recommended 10 C’s for Survival:

1. Cutting Tool (Multitool, Leatherman etc)	6. Candle Power –Glow Stick or flashlight
2. Combustion (Magnifying glass, water bottle)	7. Compass
3. Cover, Military Pancho, tarp or rain coat	8. Cargo or Duct Tape
4. Container (To collect and boil water)	9. Canvas Needle
5. Cordage. Parachute Cord or bank line	10. Cotton bandanas or Bandages

Conclusion

Despite the recent media hype with survival to include TV shows, clothing and gear, the precepts of surviving in the wild can be applied to surviving almost anywhere. As airlines experience more delays and maintenance problems, your likelihood of being “stranded” either on an aircraft or at an airport continue to increase. By conducting some basic planning and adding a few items to your normal luggage you can better ensure that when you do arrive at your destination, you are better rested, healthy and prepared for the tasks ahead.