

The Airlines Are Charging More. Are They Giving More?

By Jim Sweat, CTC

Each time I stop at the gas station to fill up I get a sudden jolt of reality. Oil...it seems to affect almost everything we touch and do these days. I am sure you have noticed all the changes, or perhaps it would be better to say "charges" and restrictions that some of the airlines have started levying onto their passengers; fuel surcharges, baggage surcharges, baggage weight surcharges and

certain limitations with carry on luggage. Some of the carriers are going to start charging for sodas and pretzels.



For sure, the price of fuel has made all of us think more about our budgets, and the airlines are no different. The efficiency of an aircraft, especially as it relates to the weight of the aircraft during take off and flight, has become an important reason for some of these surcharges. For this reason and many others the carriers must focus on additional

ways to make up for the extra added expense they now pay for fuel.

We all need to fly to get to some of our vacation destinations. While statistics do show some slowdown in airline travel at the airports, we will always need our friendly sky busses to get us to those favorite holiday spots.

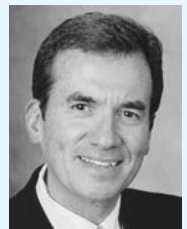
With all of the extra baggage charges that are now apparent with some of the carriers...what should you be doing to prepare for your upcoming flight?

- Overweight bags can cost you extra so please check with your carrier or travel professional to see what is allowed and how much they charge for each checked bag.
- Use lightweight luggage.
- Before you pack, you might want to plan out your itinerary and figure out what you will wear each day of the trip.
- Lay all the clothing on the bed and make an honest decision to take away what you will not need.
- If you mix and match your clothing you might not have to pack as much. A friend of mine spent a week in Paris last year and packed all of her clothing in one carry-on bag.
- Some cruise ships offer free or nominally priced washer/drier facilities on board alleviating the need to pack clothes for every day of the cruise.
- Don't forget to pack any needed medications, passports and other important documents and snacks in your carry-on luggage.
- Pack at least two days of clothing (if possible) in your carry-on luggage.
- Once you have packed it...weigh it on the bathroom scales and make sure you are not overweight. Weigh yourself without the bag, then weigh yourself with the bag and you will have a good idea.

I hope these suggestions have helped you plan for your next flying trip.

Jim Sweat, CTC is Managing Director, Travel Agency Services of AAA Auto Club South, Tampa, FL. AAA Travel, Auto Club South, with more than 3.7 million members in Florida, Georgia and Tennessee is the largest travel agency in the Southeast United States and is one of the top ten leisure travel agencies in the nation.

AAA is the largest membership travel organization in the world with 50.6 million members in the United States and Canada.



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