



*On long airport waits, try to relax and take some cat naps*

There are two basic kinds of layovers. The scheduled one features a booking that requires a connection in another airport along the way to your destination. Because of time differences and other factors, you expect to wait for the second flight for an hour or two. No problem if all goes as the schedule indicated. However, if that second flight is delayed, and your wait becomes four, five or more hours, the layover becomes a problem. That's cause for concern, frustration, and if delays go on endlessly, outright anger.

Although you can expect delays and confusion at rush holiday travel, it can happen at any other time, too. Just recently an Aeromexico flight scheduled to take off from Mexico City for Seattle, Washington, caused passengers to wait six hours in the terminal. Then, after everyone was aboard, it sat another 16 hours on the tarmac. When the aircraft finally did get into the air, because of thick fog, it had to land in Portland, Oregon. Passengers needed buses or another flight to get to Seattle.

We frequent-flyers realize that the Aeromexico incident, as frustrating as it was, is not unusual. Any flight can be delayed for hours because of screwed up schedules, bad weather, unexpected equipment delays or overcrowded air routes. Or all of the above and more.

Trapped passengers can't do anything about it, other than fret, fume and fuss. However, there are ways to make the interminable waits a bit more tolerable, whether stuck in your airline seat or slumped for long layovers in the airport lounge, . Even if you feel like prisoners, you must make up your mind to play it as cool as you can. Actually, you have no other choice if you want to preserve your blood pressure and sanity.

Preplanning for delays can be of considerable help for enduring interminable layovers. First of all, with the security measures now in place, you've already come to the airport two hours before your flight. That gives you a lot of waiting time, even if schedules are moving smoothly. You can't make time pass faster, but you can pass the time doing something other than listening to the guy next to you yakking on his cell phone.

Bring along such helpers as iPods, video cell phones, and internet-access laptops that play DVDs, and a couple of discs. If you're not into all the electronics, take a paperback or two, crossword puzzles and a deck of cards. And, if you don't want to pay airport restaurant prices for food while you wait, bring a supply of small snacks.

Additionally, take items that could make snoozing a bit more comfortable. If the airport waiting area isn't too crowded, look for sitting areas where you can stretch out. If there aren't any, find a quiet wall away from foot traffic, and make a spot for yourself against it.

If you've brought a heavy coat, soft-sided carry-on bag, visored cap or sleep mask, gather a bunch of newspapers to make a sleep nest with them all. Then, wrap yourself up, lie down, put your tired head on your bag and dream away.

On a recent flight, scheduled to travel cross-country, we sat in our onboard seats for five hours before the aircraft finally took off. While still on the tarmac, and with all passengers fussing and grumbling, some bright character got the idea of doing a sing-along. We and many others stopped grinding our teeth and relaxed enough to join in. The most popular song on that flight was the old Sinatra classic, "Come Fly With Me."