

Think ahead and be prepared. You know old man winter, hurricanes, tornados and busy holidays too often cause delays. And just everyday screw-ups in the air and on the ground also leave you stranded. You could be stuck in airports, bus stations and highway traffic jams for hours or days. Here are some suggestions that could make that wasted time pass a bit more quickly:



1. Today's best device to ease your lonesome stranding is the portable computer. For as little as \$150 (used to cost \$500 and up), you can have a multi-functioning, lightweight briefcase-sized companion on your journeys. It will occupy your wait time with online news, movies, books, games, email, music, voicemail, phone contact and many other ways to pass the boring hours.

If you're a working traveler, your laptop can become your office. Take along some of those projects, reports, correspondence and other tasks. You know they'd otherwise still be waiting to be worked on when you've reached your destination or finally make it home.

2. Don't leave home without it. Be sure to take your cell phone and charger. That tiny miracle box keeps you in constant touch with family, friends and workplace. You can also get one of the more multi-function ones that also serves as TV/still camera, TV receiver, movie player, emailer and whatever new doodad service they'll come out with next year.

3. If you're a nostalgic senior traveler and insist on doing things the old-fashioned way, bring print books, magazines, newspapers, crossword puzzles and all those other paper things that are fast disappearing from the scene. You can tote a notebook for longhand writing of the great American novel or letters to home.

4. If you don't have an up-to-date laptop computer, take a CD, DVD or tape player, along with tapes or discs of movies, books and music. However, such items are bulky, and the best situation today is to take just an all-in-one laptop. Then you can sit in the terminal watching

“March of the Penguins”.

5. A senior traveler who could be stranded for hours or more should have a medical needs kit, along with phone numbers of family doctors and neighborhood druggists. The kit should contain at least a three-day supply of prescription medicines, aspirins and other personal drugstore items you use regularly.

6. A food kit is another useful item for senior travelers who may find themselves stranded in places for hours or more. In most situations, especially airports, there are many restaurants and convenience stores nearby. However, if your stranding goes from midnight to dawn, you may find them all shut down just when you need them. Also, even when the airport shops are open, if you have your own snacks, you won't need to pay the inflated prices.

Assemble a small emergency food kit you can carry to use when stranded and throughout your travels. Include high-energy bars, peanuts, cheese crackers, cookies, hard candy and other items that can carry you through for at least several hours.

To anticipate being stranded by snow delays, just remember the Boy Scout motto: Be prepared!