

Just recently an Aeromexico flight scheduled to take off for Seattle, Washington, sat for 16 hours on the tarmac. When it finally did get in the air, because of thick fog, it landed in Portland, Oregon. Then, once the flight landed in Portland, the passengers were held aboard for another four hours, because the airport claimed the flight was totally unexpected, and there weren't enough customs agents there that day to check the passengers from Mexico back into the US.



To add misery to the already awful situation, when passengers became frustrated and protested at being held virtually as prisoners, local cops boarded the plane and threatened them with arrest if they didn't stay in their seats. It gets even worse.

When the Aeromexico flight took off again from Portland back to Mexico City, because of lack of customs service, some US citizens had to stay aboard. They were forced to fly back to start all over from square uno. Did Charlton Heston have that much trouble getting away from his slave ship in "Ben Hur"?

We frequent-flying seniors know the Aeromexico incident, as bad as it was, is not unusual. On any flight you could be delayed for hours because of bad weather, unexpected equipment delays or overcrowded air routes. Or all of the above.

Trapped passengers can't do anything about it, other than fret, fume and fuss. However, there are ways to make the interminable waits, whether stuck in your airline seat or slumped in the airport lounge, a bit more tolerable. Even if you feel like prisoners, just play it as cool as you can.

Pre-planning for delays can be of help. No matter how short the flight is supposed to take, bring along such helpers as iPods, video cell phones, online-accessed laptop that plays DVDs with four or five discs. If you're not into all the electronics, take a paperback or two, crossword puzzles and a deck of cards. And don't forget some small snacks.

On one of our recent flights, due to travel cross-country, we sat in our seats for five hours before it finally took off. While still on the ground, someone got the idea of doing a sing-along, and many passengers relaxed enough to join in. The most popular song that day was the old Sinatra classic, "Come Fly With Me."