

Plane and Simple

Flying tips for travel aficionados

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CARRY ON | Simply put, flying sucks. There is absolutely nothing pleasant about being crammed into a claustrophobic metal casing and rocketing across the sky in the company of unwashed germ-carriers who hack and sputter like they've just been released from tuberculosis quarantine. But, in order to appear like a celebrity jetsetter, you have to, well, jet set. So, for the "aeronautically averse" among us, we have composed the following list of 12 helpful tips that won't make flying more fun per se, but will at least make it slightly more tolerable.

1. Take stock of the people who are exiting the plane you are about to board. Are they green and pallid, or are they of healthy color and appearance? Do they look relaxed, or do they seem thankful just to be alive? These cues will give you not just an idea of what the air is like up there, but also hints at the temperament of your captain. Will he attempt to avoid rough air, or is he the Race Bannon of the commercial flying world?

2. Avoid looking at weather reports on the areas you're flying over. There's absolutely nothing you can do about an electrical storm over Des Moines, and knowing you've got to go through it beforehand will do nothing but give you more cause for worry. This is rather difficult, however, since airports are run by sadistic cretins who just love to inform people of foul weather at every opportunity.

3. If you dislike flying, you're very unlikely to be able to fall asleep while traveling at speeds over 500mph, 7 miles above the Earth's crust, in the fuselage of a metal tube that weighs roughly the same as a pod of beluga whales. Turbulence Meditation is the best you can hope for. To accomplish this, create a collage of nice memories/images in your head (much like the "stone cottage" from *French Kiss*) and focus on them rather than how the plane you're currently on is bouncing up and down like a hunk of Styrofoam in Waimea Bay.

4. Tell as many people as possible that you're flying, that you really don't like it and that you're a little worried about your plane. This increases the probability that you will make it to your intended destination safely, since predicting a plane crash is highly unlikely.

5. Avoid the bathrooms in the airport. Their toilet paper is of the "20 grit" variety, their hand towels have roughly the same absorbency of a sheet of aluminum foil and the horrid smell of fellow travelers is likely to haunt you later, completely screwing up your Turbulence Meditation.

6. Avoid napping, and get as little sleep as possible the night before your flight. Doing so will increase the likelihood of passing out at some point during the ride.

7. Do not get to the airport early. In fact, you should arrive late. That way, you'll be running through the airport at breakneck speed and won't have time to sit and ponder all the things that could go wrong with each and every moving part of an airplane—specifically your plane.

8. Call your mother at some point before you board. Trust us, it helps.

9. Once seated on the plane, rummage through the back pocket of the seat in front of you as if you're interested in the magazines contained therein. Surreptitiously move the air sickness bag to an easily retrievable position, just in case.

10. During turbulence, shift and fidget in your seat. This gives your mind and equilibrium the impression that you are actually in control of the bouncing and jarring going on—and not the buffeting air pressure beneath the plane's wings.

11. Do not recline your seat. To do so implies indifference to the peril of your current situation, which will undoubtedly be visited upon by karmic turbulence.

12. Never say things like "my plane will arrive at 8pm," as this makes too many assumptions. Instead, say things like "I'm supposed to be there at..." or "it's scheduled to arrive at..." These subtle variations not only remind the person picking you up that airline schedules are about as reliable as Britney Spears on mescaline, but it also allow the captain of your plane time to find the most docile, tranquil air possible.

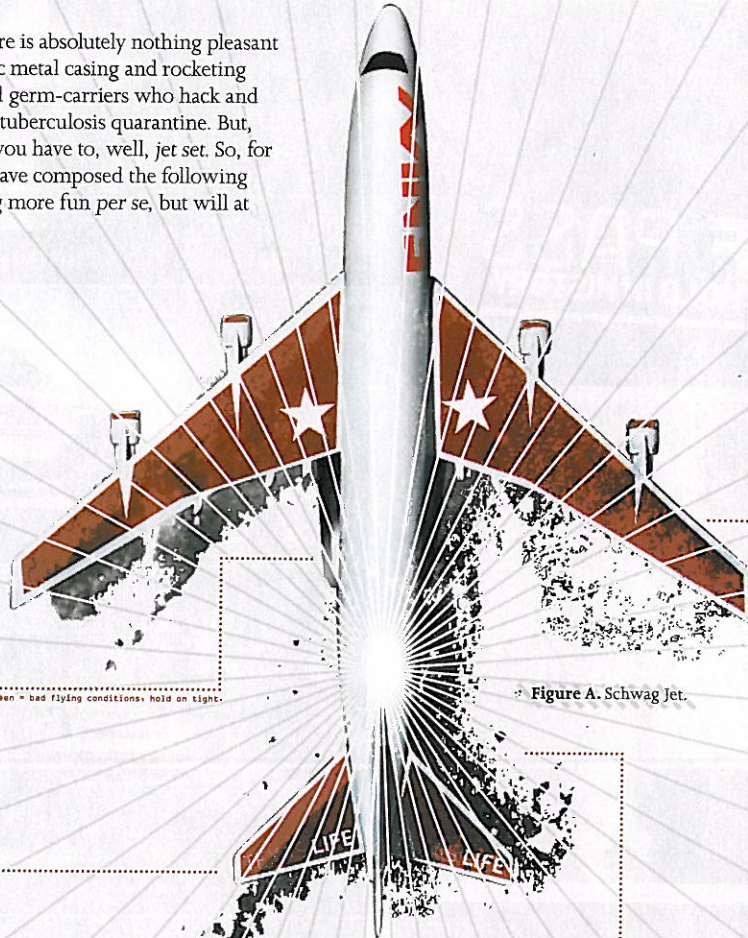


Figure A. Schwag Jet.

According to the National Safety Council, here are a few statistics on the annual odds of dying in and outside of a plane crash.

1. Ignited Nightwear (aka pajamas on fire)
1 in 41 million
2. Contact with Hot Tap Water
1 in 10 million
3. Dog Attack
1 in 10 million
4. Being Struck by Lightning
1 in 7 million
5. Being Electrocuted
1 in 3 million
6. Freezing to Death
1 in 450,000
7. Dying in a Plane Crash
1 in 450,000
8. Falling out of Bed
1 in 400,000
9. Car Accident
1 in 20,000