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# How to Survive a Night at the Airport

by: [Arden Jobling-Hey](#) in: [Editor's Desk](#)

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8 tips for surviving an overnight stay in any airport around the world...

Most consider the time spent in an airport prior to takeoff part of the excitement when it comes to travel. You're all checked in – you go through security and - breathe. You're finally on holiday. Grab a coffee, peruse the duty-free, and wait for that announcement that says you are on your way to your final destination. During the day, airports have a busy vibe that makes them a great place to hang out and kill time before, after or between destinations. But what happens when the departure board empties and the lights go out? Security guards and cleaning staff replace eager passengers, restaurants and tourist shops shut their doors for the night and the exciting vibe that once filled the walkways are replaced by intervals of vacuum cleaners and ... silence. Yikes.

The prospect of having to spend the night in an airport can be scary but believe it or not, it doesn't have to be the nightmare you anticipate. In fact, some travellers have even turned it into an art form, and there exist multiple resources online to help you prepare for spending the night in any airport, whether you've just set your feet on the ground or waiting for takeoff.

More than once, due to the early morning arrival of a fellow traveller, cancellations, or a discounted flight leaving at ungodly hours of the morning, I have had to spend the night (or most of it) at one airport or another. My particular list of airport shelters includes Dublin, Vienna and Pisa, voted one of the 10 worst airports of 2011 for airport bunking worldwide. Dublin was tolerable. Vienna was freezing, and Pisa kicked every one in the airport out between the hours of 1:00am and 4:00am.

I would love to preach about how important it is to do your airport research before you travel, but unfortunately, spending the night in the airport isn't something most of us plan for. Even if our tickets show a departing time of 3:00am, we're all so focused on the destination that we neglect to prep for the time spent waiting – and waiting – and waiting. Then there's the possibility of strikes, cancellations, mechanical failures, overbooking - the list goes on. Regardless of the reason behind the wait, if the airline refuses to put you up for the night, you will quickly – albeit, perhaps unwillingly – be welcomed into the quirky community of airport dwellers. Don't be scared!

Here are 8 tips that will help you survive the night in any airport:

## Watch Your Baggage

Your luggage is your best friend. Use your carry-on as a pillow (remove the camera beforehand) and attach your bags to your body or be prepared to snuggle up. If you fall asleep, you don't want to make it easy for someone to swipe your life belongings. Travelers Tip? If you have straps on your luggage, use them. Attach yourself to your luggage by looping your straps through your belt or another loop on your clothing. If anyone tries to grab your bag while you're dozing, you'll feel it.

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### Pack “Sensibly”

Don't want to be blinded by incandescent lights and deafened as vacuums whiz around the waiting room? Think ahead! Pack a sleep mask (they can be folded into the size of a pea and cost next to nothing) and ear plugs. These are things that you're likely to use again if you're ever jet-lagged or take the overnight train, and they will help you get some rest in the most unlikely environments.

### Get to know your surroundings

Before you try to catch some shut-eye, scout out your environment. Where are the nearest bathrooms? Do they cost money? Do they offer showers? What are the airport hours (think Pisa)? Where is security office located? Are there any shops open if you get munchie in the middle of the night? Section off your quadrant for the night and get to know it inside and out. This will guarantee that no unexpected surprises head your way.

### Be Ready to Run

Okay, you probably won't have to *run*, but the likelihood of someone (namely a security guard or cleaner) asking you to sit up or move along is relatively high. It's an airport, not a hotel and we know that! So, be ready to gather your things and move along to your next perch. On that note - plan ahead! If you get kicked out of your current parking spot, where will you go? Always have a plan B.

### Become One with the Dwellers

You may think that flying solo on this one is the way to go but if you can find a group of people who look like they've done this before, they probably have. Keep an eye out for a group of people who look like they aren't going anywhere soon. The advantage of this approach is the mutual trust installed within a small group setting - a sort of "I won't steal yours, if you don't steal mine" mentality (which allows you to nip to the washroom without dragging your whole life with you). Also, if these dwellers are as experienced as they look, they're good to have around in case of emergency or if you have any questions about what to do next. Moreover, misery loves company. If you're all bored at 3am, then at least you're bored together.

### Food and Water

Have some on hand. The last thing you want to be doing is starving while spending the night at an airport. You may think you'll sleep through it and grab something to eat in the morning but trust me, if you've never spent the night in an airport, chances are good you won't be sleeping the whole night through. Pack a snack and try to keep something non-perishable in your pack at all times! Granola bars are a blessing in disguise when hunger hits after sunset. Travelers Tip? When you scout out bathrooms, be sure to locate the nearest water fountain to ensure that you have access to some potable water if you've forgotten to purchase some beforehand.

### Pack Layers

It sounds obvious, but make sure to pack clothing you can throw on when the temperature drops in the middle of the night. More importantly, make sure to pack them near the top of your suitcase so you don't have to spread your lingerie or other personal items in front of any lucky bystanders. Although that's a quick way to make friends, you may end up sharing more than you bargained for.

### Keep Busy and Stay Positive

Needless to say, these days it is rare for anyone to leave on holiday without some sort of entertainment device. Whether it's toting around a paperback novel or dancing along to an ipod, today's society demands stimulation and will do anything to avoid the horrific onslaught of boredom (gasp). Well, you think airplane rides are tedious? After spending five hours at the airport, you'll be dying for something to do. Get creative. If you're finished your book or, heaven forbid, you've run out of battery, engage your fellow travelers in an old fashioned game of headbands - as long as you had pen and paper, you're good to go! Don't know headbands? Google it. No stationary on hand? How about twenty questions or charades? Whatever you do, don't let yourself get lost watching the minute hand make another round. If you're alone and insomnia strikes, see if you can find some free internet nearby or position yourself to people watch and write a short story about your experiences in this strange and wonderful land.

There are a million and one ways to make your airport experience more enjoyable and using this list will get you off to a great start. Just like landing an airplane - it's all in the approach. Click [here](#) for more tips on how to survive your night in the airport from [sleepinginairports.net](#) and as always, happy travels!

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Originally from Toronto, Arden has studied, volunteered and worked her way around the world. From promoting HIV/AIDS awareness as an international volunteer in Tanzania and teaching business English in Germany, to exploring hidden treasures of the Turkish bazaar and accepting a fairy tale proposal amidst the dunes of the Moroccan dessert. Arden believes that as long as there are unknown lands to discover, the adventure never ends! She holds an M.A in International Communications and Development from City University London in the UK and has worked as a freelance writer and a development

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