

OAG Executive Flight Guide

October 2003 Vol 26 Issue 3

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Valid 01 October - 31 October

Big Ben and Westminster, London
Big Ben is the name of the famous clock tower at the Palace of Westminster, home to the British Houses of Parliament



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Publisher's letter

Last year, the world's airlines carried something in the order of 1.5 billion passengers – a truly remarkable logistical achievement, bearing in mind they all have to pass through an airport at each end of the journey. For many travellers, it must seem like one bottleneck after another, from the moment they arrive at the terminal to the time they leave it at their destination: queues at check-in, immigration, security, the gate, boarding the aircraft, disembarking and then again on arrival.

Airlines once did little to dispel this view: passengers were decanted at their destination and left to get on with it. As far as the carriers were concerned, they had completed their side of the bargain. Although this still prevails in respect of the budget operators, conventional airlines have done much to address the problem in recent years in their quest to provide business customers with a seamless service.

As we report in this issue, premium passengers can be collected by chauffeur driven car at their office or home, given fast track treatment on arrival at the airport, cosseted in comfortable lounges, where they can relax or work, given priority boarding and deplaning, and whisked through the formalities on arrival, where long-haul travellers occasionally have access to somewhere to freshen up before being driven away to their ultimate destination. All of which removes much of the hassle normally associated with the business of getting from A to B.

Airlines are frequently criticised for their shortcomings, and rarely acknowledged for their achievements. In this case, and against all the odds, they have succeeded in delivering the promise – at least most of the time – even if, on the ground, airports still have some way to go.

When passengers are molly-coddled to such an extent, it is all too easy to become complacent, sometimes overlooking the basics. In our Travellers' Briefing this month, we offer a checklist to help avoid some of the more obvious pitfalls. Elsewhere, we look at Prague airport, which is poised to become a key hub for the new member states of the soon-to-be enlarged European Union; and we visit Munich, the Bavarian capital that contrives to be both stereotypically Teutonic yet arguably Germany's most individualistic city.

And there are two more prizewinning opportunities this month for our letter-writing readers and those submitting ideas for our new *Wingtips* slot. Keep them coming.

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Managing Editor

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News

Making budgets go further


 executive travel

With the International Air Transport Association (IATA) predicting an industry-wide loss this year of \$5 billion, and business hotels still reeling from the effects of the Iraqi war and SARS outbreak, the corporate market has rarely been the subject of more attention.

Travel buyers and arrangers, who have been forced to contain budgets and control costs, are now faced with a bewildering choice as the low-cost airlines and no-frills accommodation suppliers aggressively fight for a larger slice of the corporate sector. Anxious to retain or win back this lucrative business, traditional airlines and hotel groups are also pulling out all the stops.

Which is why a visit to this year's Business Travel Show in Manchester (October 8-9) is crucial if buyers are hoping to make their budgets go further. With international and local suppliers

representing all areas of the industry, from charge cards to chauffeur drive, train operators to travel management specialists, as well as around 20 airlines and a dozen accommodation providers, there will be no shortage of help and advice, all under one roof. Visitors to the show will have an opportunity to inspect and test self-booking tools and self-service reservations, with key personnel on hand to discuss net and corporate deals. And with more and more companies recognising the need to adopt a corporate travel policy, there will be valuable guidance available on their formulation and compliance.

● OAG Worldwide (Stand B8), will be among those exhibiting

Duo debut

An airline claiming it will offer a business class service at below economy fares takes to the sky on November 1. Birmingham-based Duo, which will operate flights to 11 key European destinations, is positioning itself between traditional full-service, high-fare carriers and the no-frills budget operators. A fleet of 68- and 48-seat Canadair regional jets will operate services to Berlin, Copenhagen, Geneva, Gothenburg, Lyon, Milan, Nice, Oslo, Stockholm, Stuttgart and Vienna. Flights from Edinburgh to Geneva, Milan, Oslo and Zurich are also planned from November. Fares will be available on a one-way basis.

Currently operating as British Airways franchise partner Maersk Air, the carrier was the subject of a management buy-out this summer. It began life 20 years ago as Birmingham Executive Aviation and has always had a good reputation as a business carrier.



TravelPostings



Your letters to the Editor

A test of stamina

Is it my imagination or the fact I am getting older and notice these things more, but are the distances we are required to walk at airports getting longer? I must have covered the best part of one kilometre from the immigration and security checkpoints to the departure gate at London Heathrow's Terminal 3 recently, and have walked even further at Amsterdam Schiphol. And I was in need of serious liquid refreshment by the time I reached The Pier, Cathay Pacific's excellent lounge located at the far end of the terminal at Hong Kong.

Travelators, of course, do take some of the strain (although it is surprising just how often they are out of service), but as I travel most of the time with hand baggage-only, it does mean I am lugging a suit carrier or bag on these route marches. At least it saves having to go to the gym on a regular basis!

Andrew Baker, Chorley Wood,
Hertfordshire, UK

This letter wins the writer a desktop clock.
Congratulations.

Get real, Gordon

What a prude Gordon Munro appears to be (*TravelPostings*, September). The in-flight movies shown today are no worse than what appear on television screens as part of our regular diet of entertainment. Is he equally surprised and shocked whenever he turns on the TV? This is, after all, the real world we are living in.

I think the airlines have at last got it right with an excellent selection of movies, from classics to the very latest releases, plus all the other channels

available. The cutting that previously went on to ensure they were 'suitable' for public screening in the main cabin often resulted in their complete emasculation. I returned on a Singapore Airlines flight from London recently and caught up with some of the best movies I have seen for a long time.

Peter Boyes
Singapore

Flyway robbery

How can airlines continue to justify charging outrageous business class fares on short-haul routes when you can travel for a fraction of the price with a no-frills carrier? I accept there is a premium to be paid for the benefits of a flexible ticket, plus perhaps a snack and a drink, but having to pay up to eight times more for the privilege seems excessive by any standards. Surely the days of short-haul business class must be numbered?

Karen Brodie,
Stuttgart, Germany

Farewell Concorde

This month sees the end of Concorde flights and I, for one, will lament its passing. After 27 years' of service, it is still an eye-catcher when it flies overhead. I had the good fortune to use it on three occasions and thought the experience wonderful – once flying from London Heathrow at 10.30am, attending a lunchtime meeting in Manhattan and returning the same day, touching down at 10.30pm. My only disappointment was that Mick Jagger didn't recognise *me*!

Colin Fairfax
Chiswick, London W4, UK



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Hotel Briefing

Radisson Edwardian expands its London portfolio

Radisson Edwardian Hotels has gained a major foothold in London's most fashionable district with its acquisition of the Inter-Continental May Fair. The 289-room property in Stratton Street, just off Berkeley Square, increases the group's portfolio of 4- and 5-star hotels in the capital to 11. Since its opening in

following an extensive £8 million refurbishment. And the group's first property outside London will see Manchester's historic Free Trade Hall transformed into a £45 million luxury 263-room 5-star hotel when it opens in June of next year.

Tomorrow's world here today

San Francisco's Pan Pacific hotel is providing guests with more than just a glimpse into the future with its new, state-of-the-art in-room entertainment system. As well as offering a choice of the latest on-demand digital movies and short films, there is a digitally delivered music selection, time-shifted TV, Nintendo video games, high-speed Internet access, a virtual concierge service, which includes flight schedules, news, weather, sports and e-greetings, and the ability to review accounts on-screen together with video check-out. Plus all the usual satellite TV links and local networks. At this rate, no one will ever want to leave the room...

Name change

A leading Hong Kong hotel changes its name this month, adopting that of a legendary London property also owned by the HK-based Langham International group. The Great Eagle, in Kowloon, which becomes the Langham, is marking its new identity with the launch of a special two-night, three-day package. The Langham Experience, valid until the end of next year, offers accommodation in one of the hotel's 12 exclusive Langham suites, and includes round-trip airport transfers by limo; the choice of a lobster and champagne dinner or two massage treatments at the hotel's health club; access to an exclusive Club lounge; and use of the 24-hour fitness centre and rooftop pool. The cost is US\$560 (€ 514) per person.



1927 by King George V, the May Fair has enjoyed a loyal following of the rich and famous. Facilities include a penthouse suite with private lift, two restaurants, 290-seat theatre auditorium, ballroom, and fitness club complete with swimming pool.

There are already plans to expand and refurbish the hotel, involving the construction of a new six-floor wing, and an 8th floor extension, adding 80 rooms, as well as extending and improving conference and meetings facilities.

The former 3-star Savoy Court recently reopened as the 4-star Radisson Edwardian Sussex,



Win this elegant, multi functional World Time Clock for the best published monthly tip from a reader

wingtip

I always carry a basic 'survival' kit whenever and wherever I travel: a small pouch with a spare pair of socks, underpants, all-in-one toothbrush and paste, a miniature phial of shaving oil, a plastic razor (before they were prohibited in cabin baggage), pills for diarrhoea and headaches, a small pack of biscuits, chocolate bar, a 0.25 litre bottle of water and a spare pair of glasses. You would be amazed at the number of times it has come to my rescue – for delayed flights, especially when you sit on the ground for a couple of hours without food or drink, when your bags are mislaid, or simply finding everywhere

closed when you are in need of some basic sustenance or medication. Furthermore, it takes up little space and, apart from the water, weighs next to nothing.

Submitted by **John Crayford, Barcelona, Spain**, who wins this month's prize for his suggestion. **Congratulations.**

Send your suggestions to Wingtip, OAG Executive Travel, OAG Worldwide, Church Street, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 4HB, United Kingdom, or e-mail eteditor@oag.com



Airline of the Year

The prestigious OAG Airline of the Year Awards — the Oscars of the sky — recognise the very best in service, both in the air and on the ground. Singapore Airlines again confirmed its position as the world's top carrier by sweeping

the board at the 2003 Awards. Soon we will be asking readers to cast their votes in the 2004 poll. Will SIA repeat its success or is the competition hotting up for the 19 regional and global categories? A case of watch this space.

WINNER

Airline of the Year 2003
Singapore Airlines

Best Airline based in Western Europe
British Airways

Best Airline based in Central/Eastern Europe
LOT Polish Airlines

Best Airline based in Asia
Singapore Airlines

Best Airline based in Central/South America/Caribbean
LanChile

Best Airline based in North America
Midwest Airlines

Best Airline based in Australasia/Pacific
Qantas Airways

Best Airline based in the Middle East/Indian Sub-Continent
Emirates

Best Airline based in Africa
South African Airways

Best Europe to Far East/Australasia Airline
Singapore Airlines

Best Trans-Pacific Airline
Singapore Airlines

Best Trans-Atlantic Airline
British Airways

Best International First Class
Singapore Airlines

Best Executive/Business Class
Continental Airlines

Best Economy Class
Singapore Airlines

Best Frequent Flyer Programme
Air Canada

Best Low-Cost Airline
Southwest Airlines

Best Airline Website
Air Canada

Best Airport
Singapore Changi



Travel's Holy Grail

If the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, why are travellers subjected to so many twists and diversions? Colin Ellson looks at the question and suggests some answers

Seamless travel is the Holy Grail for which road warriors traditionally search in vain. Getting from A to B in as straight a line as possible, in the shortest time, with the minimum of hassle, should, in theory, be universally achievable a century after the Wright Brothers gave us wings.

Tell that to the birds. Airlines, airports, and surface transport operators generally do their best to integrate their operations, but the ever-changing realities of travel tend to put the seamless goal tantalisingly out of reach.

Apparently, it was ever thus. In the largely experimental early years, as fledgling commercial aviation tested its flight feathers, Sir William Hildred, the first boss of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), claimed the stress of flying was in the air. The airports, he noted, were “wonderfully comfortable” places.

Today, the roles have been reversed: airlines make the flight reassuringly safe and comfortable, offer the perks of frequent flyer programmes, and conclude code-share agreements in the name of passenger convenience. But back on terra firma, terminals are far from being “wonderfully comfortable”. Rather, they have become

congested bottlenecks, their efficiency in innovations such as fast track and e-ticketing frustrated by air traffic control delays and extra security checks, problems compounded by the relentless growth in air travel.

Getting to the airport in the first place often disproves the theory that it is better to travel than to arrive, although a growing number of gateways are making the going easier by constructing fast rail links. Nevertheless, taking London's main airports as a yardstick, 66% of travellers prefer to drive themselves to the terminal rather than use public transport.



Driven by competition

Or let the airline take the wheel. A number of carriers — including Air New Zealand, ANA, Cathay Pacific, Continental, Emirates and Royal Brunei — offer the promise of seamlessness for at least the first or last leg of a trip at selected destinations. Collecting premium passengers from within a given radius of their departure point, they whizz them by chauffeur-driven limousine to within a few metres of check in.

Virgin Atlantic, for example, provides the facility at 20 points on its global network; Emirates' limos pick up and deliver passengers throughout the United Arab Emirates; Continental has chauffeured vehicles warmed up and waiting at all 140 points it serves in the US; and ANA gives its premium passengers a choice between valet parking at Heathrow or a luxury car with driver in Tokyo. Malaysia Airlines goes one step further by offering first class passengers complimentary helicopter transfers in Paris and London.

More seamless still is Virgin's Drive Thru check-in at London's Heathrow and Gatwick, where Upper Class travellers are security profiled, relieved of their luggage and issued with boarding cards without leaving the leathery luxury of the airline's Volvo S80 super limos. American Airlines has a similar service at Heathrow, and its passengers enjoy kerbside check-in the other side of the Atlantic.

Privileged class

Such privileges come as of right with a business or first class ticket, far fewer of which are being issued as corporate travel budgets are tightened. Which means the increasing number of executives forced to travel economy are looking for other ways to retain the perks that make life on the road a little more seamless.

Where the carrier does not offer a limo, for example, many are turning to private operators like Carey Worldwide, which claims to offer highly competitive rates in 480 cities in 75 countries. Other corporate travellers, especially in the small- to medium-enterprise (SME)

sector, are opting to pay an annual premium to key into the full services of an "extras" club, such as Wexas, Diners Club, and the International Airline Passengers Association.

With 400,000 members in 200 countries, who benefit from its buying power in terms of preferential airline, hotel, insurance, and car rental rates normally reserved for large corporations, IAPA works closely with sister company Priority Pass, which claims to offer the largest choice of that other essential piece in the seamless jigsaw — the airport lounge. It has 400 worldwide, compared to Wexas' 104 and Diners' 80, with members of all three clubs paying at the door to enter.

Meanwhile, the airlines are continuing to expand their own network of lounges to give executives the opportunity to both work and relax. KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, for example, operates Holideck at Heathrow, a three-floor, pay-at-the-door lounge with a new, fully equipped business section.



And arrivals lounges are now an established feature for many premium class travellers, enabling them to step off the aircraft, freshen up with a shower, have clothes pressed, enjoy a spot of breakfast and catch up with e-mails before continuing their journey or heading off for the first meeting of the day in a chauffeur-driven limo.

Which is about as seamless as it gets — unless you can hitch a ride in Harry Potter's flying car.





Prague

Dynamic development heralds a new era

Destination
(PRG)



The Czech Republic's pivotal role as a hub for Central and Eastern Europe will be enhanced with the opening of a new terminal in 2005. Leon Barber reports

When Prague's new Terminal North 2 opens in two years' time, the role of the Czech Republic's main international gateway will be considerably strengthened as a key hub for Central and Eastern Europe. The addition will increase the annual passenger capacity of Ruzyne airport by 3.5 million to 10 million, making it the largest among the newly joining member countries of the enlarged EU.

The new and old terminals will be linked by a connecting building, thus eliminating the need for a shuttle service between the two. The split-level Terminal 2 will separate EU and non-EU citizens as well as arrivals and departures.

Currently handling around 6.3 million passengers per year, the airport has 37 scheduled airlines (plus three cargo and 15 charter carriers) operating to some 79 destinations worldwide, with an expanding charter operation serving a further 25 seasonal

points. In addition to a growing business market, Prague, as one of Europe's most popular city break choices, is also enjoying a boom in leisure traffic. Although this suffered a setback at the end of last year because of extensive and damaging floods, the airport recorded an increase of 6.4% in passenger numbers during the first six months of this year compared to the same period in 2002. This was despite the negative impact of the Iraq war and general downturn because of SARS.



For business travellers, the Bohemia lounge is for use by first/business class passengers and Diners Club cardholders, and offers Internet access, fax and photocopying facilities. Others can use the lounge for a small charge. There is also a 12-seat conference room for small meetings and a 35-seat Press Room, both of which are available for hire.

Flight departure and arrival information is available to mobile phone users via wap.csl.cz

At-a-glance guide

Location: 16 kilometres (10 miles)

Transport links: airport bus takes 20-25 minutes and costs CZK15 (€0.50); minibus service operates from the airport at half-hourly intervals and costs CZK90 (€2.80); Fix-Airport cars offer air-conditioned transfers for CZK120-CZK875 (€3.70-€27) according to price zone, with a journey time of 30-40 minutes.

Annual passenger throughput: 6.3 million (2002)

Minimum connecting times: 40min (domestic) and 55min (international)

Facilities: first-floor restaurant complex consists of a full service restaurant, club bar and two self-service cafeterias; mobile phone rental

Bank/Cashpoint: bank, five exchange counters and three automatic cash dispensers

Airlines: Aer Lingus, Aeroflot Russian Airlines, Aerosvit Airlines, Air Baltic, Air Moldova, Air Ukraine, Airzena Georgian Airlines, Alitalia, Austrian Airlines, Belavia, bmibaby, British Airways, Croatia Airlines, CSA, easyJet, El Al Israel Airlines, Finnair, German Wings, Jugoslovenski Aerotransport, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, Kuwait Airways, LOT Polish Airlines, Lufthansa, MALEV Hungarian Airlines, Pulkovo Aviation, SAS Scandinavian Airlines, SkyEurope, SN Brussels Airlines, SWISS, Tunis Air, Turkish Airlines

Executive lounges: Bohemia (first/business class passengers, Diners Club cardholders and

payment on entry for others) provides refreshments, Internet access, fax and photocopying

Airport hotels: Airport Hotel (4-star, 56 rooms), close to South Terminal; EuroAgentur

Car rental desks: Alimex, Avis, Budget, CS-Czechocar, Dvorak, Europcar, Hertz, National/Alamo, Sixt

Website: www.csl.cz





Munich

Germany with a difference

The Bavarian capital contrives to be both stereotypically Teutonic yet arguably Germany's most individualistic city.

Jonathan Hart reports

Destination
(MUN)

Currency: Euro

Tippling: restaurant bills generally include service but 10%-15% is discretionary. Taxi drivers expect 5%-10%

Time: GMT+1 (GMT+2 between April-October)

Electricity: 220 volts (2-pin plugs)

Public holidays 2003/2004: October 3; November 1, 19; December 25, 26; January 1, 6; February 19; April 9, 12; May 1, 20, 31; June 10; August 15; October 3; November 1, 17; December 25, 26

Climate: temperate but changeable. Summers can be hot, winters wet and cold with some snow. Rainfall throughout the year, but generally the heaviest downpours between May and August

Airport: 28km (18 miles) north-east of the city. Trains (S1 and S8) every 10-20 minutes (reduced frequency at weekends) with a journey time of 30-40 minutes (€ 8); airport bus every 20 minutes (45 minutes/€ 9); taxis take 45 minutes and cost € 50

Business hours: 08.00-16.00

International dialling code: 00 49.

In emergency: 110 (police), 112 (fire and ambulance)

Business do's and don'ts

- Do** be punctual for meetings — lateness is seen as a discourtesy
- Do** be prepared for plenty of hand-shaking. The German custom is for a woman to stretch out her hand first
- Do** carry some form of identification with a photograph. Police can demand to see identification at any time
- Do** avoid the familiar *Du* form of address unless you know it is acceptable
- Do**, as a matter of courtesy, show you have a basic knowledge of German
- Don't** litter or cross the street against a pedestrian red light. Both offences carry a penalty of an instant fine



Amid the increasing uniformity of the eurozone, there are still cities that exude a distinct local character, apparently more determined than most to cement their cultures or curiosities against a tide of standardisation.

Berliners would argue differently, but in Germany it is Munich that is widely acknowledged to be the most different, varied and gemütlich of the main business centres; more stylish, diverse and welcoming than the strict Teutonic norm, yet upholder nonetheless of a rich national stereotype.

Munich defies the mainstream in that it is predominantly Catholic by religion yet far from catholic in outlook or taste. Offbeat in that it is open and gregarious, yet a stickler for quality and discipline. Confusing in that it is happy, even proud, to carry the cartoon mantle of the sausage-munching, beer-swilling, lederhosen-slapping Germans.

But, arguably, this is the sleekest and most proficient of the country's corporate city players in a depressed economic climate; rich in new investment and profit potential for its location on the doorstep of Austria, Italy and – most importantly – EU newcomers from the east. Witness Munich's smart new airport and general air of unfettered optimism.

As home to electronics giant Siemens, major insurer Allianz, and BMW, and boasting more than 100,000 enterprises in all, Munich is almost as big in bio-tech as it is in manufacturing and financial services, combining hi-tech with higher academia in university, research and application. Little wonder that the European Patent Office is

based here, plus a good portion of the national media and film sectors.

Bavarian pride insists that Münchener's trumpet their differences and specialities loud and clear, proclaiming the complementary benefits of countless beer gardens, oompah bands and ebullient festivals of old tradition with 21st century skyscrapers and numerous, large scale convention and exhibition venues.

That the city enjoys ongoing success and popularity while others feel the economic pinch is evidenced in hard-to-find vacancies in the 40,000 hotel rooms at any time of the year, but particularly during Fasching (Carnival) in January/February, the festival season of July/August, and Oktoberfest, the drinking extravaganza, in September/October.

There are no such worries about getting around a city that preserves its medieval monuments and marketplaces as proudly as it promotes its quality in music, the arts and modernity, together with multi-purpose entertainment complexes packed with concert halls, bars, clubs, restaurants and amusement arcades.

Reasonably-priced U-Bahn and S-Bahn trains criss-cross the city neatly and efficiently, as do trams and buses. There are also S-Bahn and bus links to and from the airport, as well as plentiful supplies of Mercedes taxis.

For carnivores and beer lovers, there is no finer place. For others, Munich's primary flavour lies in its more than cursory nod to bohemia while toeing the line of German formality; a city serious about business yet also openly delighting in the bacchanalian and bizarre.



Checking the obvious

Most frequent flyers tend to be on automatic pilot when they travel: trip preparation, packing, getting to and from the airport, checking in and out of the hotel and getting around the destination city. However, even the most experienced of travellers occasionally overlook the basics. Here's our checklist to ensure you don't come unstuck.

Familiarity, wrote Mark Twain, breeds contempt. Perhaps, more accurately, that should have read complacency. That is certainly true in the case of many frequent travellers for whom travel is merely a means to an end: to get on with the job in hand, to transact business or to complete whatever has to be done with the minimum of fuss and hassle. That is the nature of the game – the travel element is something that has to be undertaken to achieve it.

As such, it is possible to become blasé. Not many people actually forget their passports or pack them in their luggage these days, but it is easy to overlook the fact that many countries require a minimum validity of three or even six months on a passport before allowing you in. Even the most experienced of travellers have been known to be denied entry due to this elementary oversight.

And, still on the subject of passports, this month sees the introduction of stiffer security measures by the United States, which means those travelling on its visa waiver programme

must have a machine-readable passport. If you don't, you are unlikely to get further than your departure airport or, if you do, there is a good chance you will be turned back on arrival.

Then there are jabs. Most regular travellers keep them up to date as a matter of course, but it is worth checking from time to time to ensure nothing has lapsed – particularly those vaccinations that have a shelf life of years. And the more health conscious always carry a small medical kit with them, including sterilised needles in places where AIDS is endemic.

The secret, however, is to travel light – pack only what you are likely to wear and nothing else – you can always buy clothing if you need it. And many frequent travellers simplify matters by wearing a colour co-ordinated wardrobe, which means you don't have to pack shoes of different colours and other accessories which merely add to the weight of a bag. Admittedly this is harder for women travellers, but the rules still apply.

With more and more suitcases looking the



same, it is worth travelling with one of an unusual colour or with distinctive markings. Personalised luggage straps are one easy way of identifying your suitcase from the rest on the carousel – and reduce the risk of someone else walking away with your luggage by mistake.

Not everyone – even those travelling in business class or members of frequent flyer programmes – has automatic access to lounges. It is worth remembering that you can join a lounge access scheme, such as Priority Pass with more than 400 lounges worldwide. A useful alternative is to carry a Diners Card, which also gives holders entry to 80 airline lounges around the world.

If your ticket doesn't entitle you to fast track services through airport immigration and security, it is worth investigating whether or not the facility is purchasable as it can save valuable time for those in a hurry.

Another time-saving benefit is to opt for Executive floor accommodation, which invariably entitles users to priority check-in – occasionally at a dedicated desk on the floor itself – as well as rapid and often a late check-out facility. A further advantage of using an executive floor is access to a private lounge, where breakfast is served in the morning (much quicker than in the main restaurant), refreshments during the day, and often complimentary cocktails or drinks in the evening. It also provides a quiet refuge from the rest of the hotel, particularly when things are busy.

Most frequent travellers regard themselves as streetwise and do not take unnecessary risks, avoiding no-go areas where they exist and taking sensible precautions while on the move and in the hotel room. At the airport security scanner, for example, the wary will always keep a watchful eye on laptops and other valuables going through the machine – at the other end of the conveyor belt they are easy pickings for thieves if you are still stuck in the queue or someone is blocking your view. By

the time you've been screened, a pilferer can have evaporated into the crowd. Using in-room safes for valuables, such as passport and tickets as well as other more obvious possessions, is also common sense. Never leave the 'Make Up Room' sign on the door, which merely advertises the fact you are out – it is even worth leaving the TV on as an added precaution.

It is also worthwhile carrying a wallet with out-of-date cards (hotel key cards are a good substitute as are expired loyalty programme membership cards) and any currency you might still have that is no longer legal tender. A mugger is hardly likely to hang around long enough to check the validity of any plastic or banknotes you might have had on you.

Hotel fires are rare but not unknown and it always pays to check the whereabouts of fire exits, physically walking down the corridor to familiarise yourself with your escape route, should it be needed. Too many people have died needlessly simply because they turned the wrong way in a smoke-filled corridor.

The biggest risk? Complacency.



What's on

A selection of major conferences, exhibitions, sporting, cultural and other events around the globe during October and November

October

- 5 Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe (horse-racing), Paris
- 6-10 Meetings & Incentives Travel Show, London
- 7-15 Paris Fashion Week, France
- 8-9 Business Travel 2003 (exhibition), Manchester, UK
- 8-13 Frankfurt Book Fair, Germany
- 12-14 Association of Corporate Travel Executives Global Conference, Dublin
- 18 Dubai Champion Stakes (horse-racing), Newmarket, UK
- 19 Superbike World Championship (final round), Magny-Cours, France
- 23-3/11 British Motor Show, Birmingham, UK
- 24-27 Cork Jazz Festival, Eire
- 27/28 Start of Ramadan

November

- 4 Melbourne Cup (horse-racing), Australia
- 10-13 World Travel Market, London
- 15 Thomas Pink Gold Cup (horse-racing), Cheltenham, UK
- 15-16 Elephant round-up, Surin, Thailand
- 16 Macau Grand Prix (F3 motor-racing)
- 23 Japan Cup (horse-racing), Tokyo
- 26 End of Ramadan
- 29 Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup (horse-racing), Newbury, UK

