

## In the Airplane



If this is your first time to America, or for a trans-Atlantic flight, you might have some questions on how to prepare your baggage, how to pack and what to pack.

Pack your belongings in two categories: a small backpack or handbag for personal items you want to take with you on-board, and a large suitcase for all your other items.

Be aware that some airlines, especially if you will have a connection flight from state to state after your arrival to the USA, have **weight limitation** for baggage. **Weight limitation is 32 kg or 70 lbs (pound) per suitcase (1 Kg = 2.2 LB).** Please be careful that Egypt Air might allow you to have extra weight; this may not be the case with the airline for the connection flight within the US. Best is to call the airline you are flying with and ask about the weight limits for baggage.

Every **adult person** is allowed to have **2 suitcases, 32 kg each**, and a **hand bag** to be carried with him on plane (you can check for the dimensions and weight for this hand bag with your airline agency before flight). Each **child** is allowed to have only **one 22 kg (50 lbs)**.

### **What to take on-board?**

**On board** you are allowed to have a **hand bag and one personal item**, please refer to the back of your ticket to see what you can take with you on-board.

### **General tips to be followed before getting to the airplane:**

- 1- Do not forget to take your passport, tickets and all your official documents in your hand bag.
- 2- Money: please be advised that USCIS (previously known as INS) requires that you **MUST** have at least \$2000 (Two Thousand dollars) upon first arrival to the USA. USCIS officers do not usually check, however you might be subject to investigation at any time regarding this issue. This amount can be in the form of Cash (not recommended) or traveler's checks (recommended).
- 3- If you have a child who is less than 2 years old, you can ask for a **passé net** where he / she can sleep. This is a free of charge service that you have to ask for when you are booking your tickets and confirm it at the time of check in at the airline front desk. Please be advised that there are limited numbers of **passé net** (usually 2 for the whole airplane). They follow, first come first

serve rule, so plan to be as early as possible in the airport to get this service, if you need it. You will have this service for long flights only and it is not available for connection flights.

- 4- If you switch planes, you have to have a layover of 2-3 hours or more for the connecting flight, especially if you are eligible for **Special Registration** (Males from the age of 16-45) or changing airports.
- 5- Be aware of certain food regulations on the airplane or the check-in area. It is not allowed to bring with you or take abroad certain food products.
- 6- The USA customs will not allow you to have plants, seeds, meat, meat products and fruits entered to the USA. They will dispose any on site. If you lie about having these products it will be considered a federal offence; you might be fined, sued or even prevented from entering to the USA. **Only food allowed is cheese** and you have to declare that on the customs form. You are allowed to have **snacks and cookies** with you as well.
- 7- If you want to work and have a laptop, take it with you on board for two reasons:
  - A. It can help you spend the time productively.
  - B. Baggage is usually not handled very carefully, unless you indicate that you have a fragile item, such as your laptop, in one of your suitcases.
- 8- We recommend that you include in your backpack an extra pair of socks, a T-shirt or a shirt. You can go to the lavatory and change it any time, if necessary. **Wearing comfortable clothing is adventitious for such a long trip.**
- 9- If you are a **tall person**, we suggest that you ask the airline employee at the check-in desk if she/he can give you an **aisle seat** instead of a window or a middle seat.
- 10- Over-weight persons can ask for extra seat belt before the plane takes off.
- 11- **Cell phones must be shut off during take off and landing.** In USA the cellular system is different, and you need a special phone to be able to use it in America. So most probably don't bother yourself to bring your cell phone with you because it won't work, unless it is tri-band phone 900/1800/1900 MHz.
- 12- Laptops and other electronic devices can be operated onboard after the plane reaches a certain height and when the flight attendant announces that you can use them. They are not allowed to operate during take-off or landing.
- 13- If someone asked you to carry items for his/her relatives in the USA, make sure that you know and see the stuff you are carrying. Make sure that you will not carry prohibited materials (item 7 and 8).
- 14- **Never attend, carry or guard suitcases that are not your belongings.** In USA airports you might be subjected to random checks any time.

In the airplane during your flight you receive two forms: an Arrival/Departure Form (also called I-94) and a Customs Declaration Form. The flight attendants will help you fill out both. You will have to fill out some of your personal information like name, date of birth, passport number, your contact address in the US etc.

## Landing in the USA



Most international US airports reserve one or more terminals for international flights only. Before you are granted entrance to US territory you have to pass two checks: INS check and US Customs check.

The **USCIS** (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) previously known as Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is a governmental agency responsible for immigration-related services and enforcement of immigration laws and regulations. It is in charge amongst other things for:

- 1-Port-of-entry inspections
- 2- Border control
- 3- Work authorizations and permits
- 4- Granting refugee and asylum status
- 5- Deportation of illegal immigrants and unlawful residents
- 6- Document fraud and others

### **INS Check:**

To the INS officer you will present your (and your dependents') passport and the I-94 form (s), However be prepared to wait and stay in a long line. Sometimes, especially when several international flights arrive at the same time, the INS inspection area can be quite busy. It is not uncommon to see 20-30 or more INS officers processing applications on 20-30 or more lines. The lines should move pretty fast, however sometimes it might take 30-50 minutes or more to get through. Just be patient, smile and relax. Please be advised that while you are waiting in the line **you are not allowed to skip others' turns.**

The INS officer always inquires about the purpose and estimated length of your stay. In case of tourists and students they often ask how much money do they have available, who will take care of them etc. Be prepared to answer these questions. Usually this questioning is very light, just like a formality, but sometimes if they suspect you try to hide something from them they can go into much more details. **The INS officer has the right to refuse anyone's entrance in the US whatever your entrance category is. Moreover, they can even cancel your visa and send you home right away if they find it appropriate.**

**Answer their questions in a straightforward and polite manner** (For example if he asked you what is your sex don't think that he is joking and try to play funny, answer the question directly without a comment from your side).

**Special Registration** is required for all people coming to the USA. You will be fingerprinted, left and right thumb, and will have your photo taken. This is an ordinary security procedure enacted after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on the USA.

At the end the INS officer will stamp on your **I-94** form the admittance date, detach a portion of your I-94 form and stamp it in your passport. Take good care of it and don't lose it. **You will have to submit it to the INS officer when you leave the US.**

The admittance date stamped usually in red onto the I-94 is the last date when you can stay legally in the US. For a visitor visa this is usually 3-6 months. In other words you **MUST** leave the US at latest at the stamped date, Even if your visa is valid much longer (e.g. 10 years for a visitor visa), you can not stay past the stamped date. For F-1 and J-1 Visa it is usually stamped (DS) which is an abbreviation to Duration of Status.

After you passed the INS you have to go through the **US Customs check**. This is usually pretty fast. While you wait in line for the INS check, the entire baggage from the airplane is transferred to the baggage claim areas. After you passed the INS check you are free to find and pick-up your baggage (Baggage Claim Area). After doing so, go to the US Customs. They will X-ray your bags, ask you if you have anything to declare, if you have any hazardous materials with you, then you will give them the Customs Declaration Form and you are free to go.

Just as a remark, once entered in the US you probably won't have too much to deal with the INS. If you fly on domestic flights (only inside the US, without leaving the country) you never will be checked by the INS again. Normally they check you at the arrival and departure only.

### **Did You Know?**

At most of the American airports, **baggage carrier trolleys are not free** of charge. You will have to pay a nominal charge of 25 cents to 4 dollars, so make change ready in your pocket.

You can ask for the help of baggage carrier personnel. They will bring their own trolleys. There is no charge but you have to tip them tipping range from 5-10 dollars (Based on the number of suitcases and the distance moved).

## **First to Do in the USA**

### **When you arrive you MUST do the following issues:**

- 1- If you are a missions student / scholar or a self-financed student under the supervision of missions department you have to send a fax to the Egyptian Cultural and Educational Bureau (ECEB) including the following:
  - A-A statement from you indicating your arrival date to your University. You have to state whether you are accompanied by your family or not.
  - B-A copy of all the biographical pages of your and your dependents passports showing your personal data, USA visa and stamps of departure and admissions.
  - C-A copy of your DS-2019 (J-1/ J-2) or I-20 (F-1/ F-2) and I-94 forms

The fax number for the ECEB is 202-296-3891; the phone number is 202-296-3888.
- 2- All Students/ Scholars should report to the Office of International Education (OIE) in their universities. They should have all documents with them at the time of reporting. OIE will make copies of your documents for filing. You may want to ask the OIE officials, while you are already there, to issue you the appropriate letters to have your Social Security number and driver license issued.
- 3- Do not forget to ask the OIE personnel where you can issue your University ID.