**Holiday Travel Tips: What to Do Before Leaving Home**

There’s no doubt that a lot of Americans will be on the move at airports on the day before Thanksgiving, as well as the days leading up to Christmas and New Year’s.

In 2014, the trade group Airlines for America projected that 25 million people would fly on U.S. airlines during the 12-day Thanksgiving travel period and 45 million people would fly during the 19-day period before Christmas through the New Year’s Day weekend.

Advance planning is key if you’ll be flying during either of those time periods, especially if you’re at one of the nation’s busiest airports including Atlanta, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas or New York – that’s because the day before Thanksgiving is traditionally the busiest travel day of the year for flying.

Before any trip, it’s important to make a checklist of essential items. It’s easy to forget things like chargers for electronic devices and smartphones, and you don’t want to spend your trip looking for replacements.

If you’re traveling internationally, double check that you have your passport. It’s a good idea to bring a copy with you in case something happens to the original. And make sure you have your passport and ID where you can easily reach them.

Airlines generally allow passengers to check in online 24 hours in advance. Printing out your boarding pass will save time, especially if you’re not checking any bags. Or if you have your airline’s app on your phone, you can get a digital version of your boarding pass.

You can see whether or not there’s a meal or snack on your flight and either get something at the airport or bring a snack from home. But check what kinds of food the TSA allows in carry-ons.

It’s crucial to check whether your luggage meets the airline’s size and weight restrictions for checked baggage and carry-ons. Overhead space will be at a premium during holiday travel, especially as people bring gifts from friends and family or return home with gifts they’ve been given. If you’re traveling on a smaller plane with limited overhead bin space, you may have no choice but to check your bags – or planeside check them, so make sure essential items such as medications stay with you.

Speaking of gifts, wrapped packages are screened like any other item. Scanners can see through paper just like they can see through luggage. But just as Transportation Security Administration officials sometimes have to open a bag when it requires a search, it’s the same for a wrapped gift.

To be on the safe side, make sure that your gifts are small enough so that you can carry them unwrapped through security, or ship them in advance. If you decide to bring them with you, also consider packing pre-cut paper and a small roll of tape so you can wrap them up after you pass through the security screening or when you reach your destination.

Finally, leave plenty of time to get to the airport and through security. Traffic may be heavier than usual and the line for security screenings could be longer. As a guide, Delta Air Lines normally recommends arriving at the airport 75 minutes prior to departure for domestic flights and three hours before international flights.

For help planning a trip at any time of year, contact your local Travel Leaders of Colorado Springs.