



Just recently a flight scheduled to take off for Seattle from Mexico City, sat for 16 hours on the tarmac. When it finally did get into the air, because of thick fog, it landed in Portland at midnight.

Then, once the flight landed, the passengers were held aboard for another four hours. The airport claimed the flight was totally unexpected, and no customs agents there at that hour to check passengers from Mexico back into the U.S. To add misery to the already awful situation, when passengers became frustrated and protested at being held virtually as prisoners, local cops boarded the plane. When protests continued, passengers were threatened with arrest if they didn't stay seated.

Frequent-flying seniors are very aware that the incident, as bad as it was, is not unusual these days. On any flight you could be delayed for hours because of bad weather, unexpected equipment delays or overcrowded air routes. Or all of the above.

Trapped passengers can't do anything about it, other than fret, fume and fuss. However, there are ways to make the interminable waits, whether stuck in your airline seat or slumped in the airport waiting area, a bit more tolerable. Even if you feel like prisoners, just play it as cool as you can.

Pre-planning for delays can help. No matter how short the flight is supposed to take or wait time in the airport, bring along such helpers as iPods, smartphones, online-accessed laptop that plays DVDs with four or five discs. If you're not into all the electronics, take a paperback or two, crossword puzzles and a deck of cards. And don't forget some small snacks.

On another recent flight, passengers sat in their seats for five hours before it finally took off. While still on the ground, someone got the idea of doing a sing-along, and many passengers relaxed enough to join in. The most popular song that day was the Sinatra classic, "Come Fly With Me."