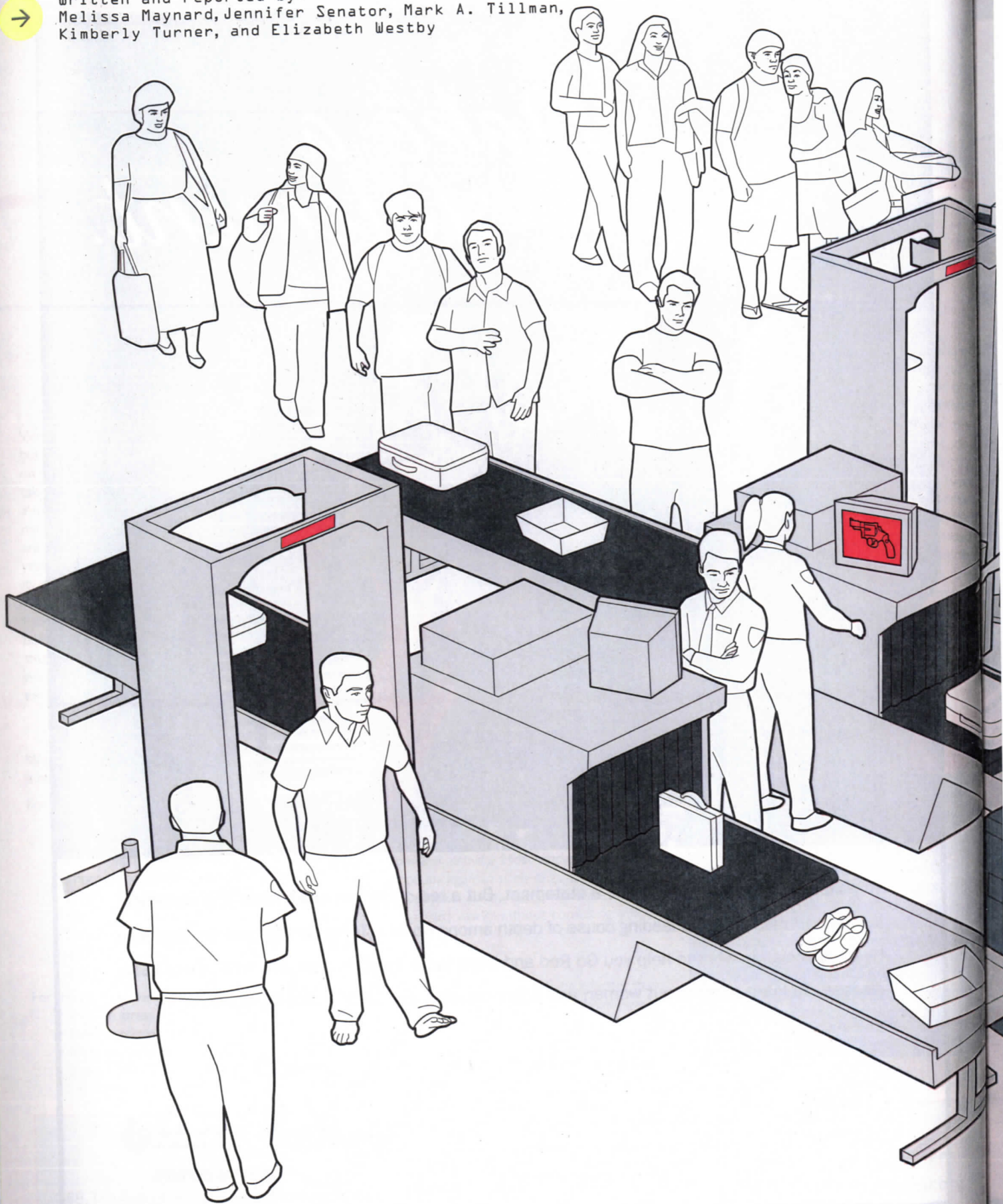




Written and reported by:
Melissa Maynard, Jennifer Senator, Mark A. Tillman,
Kimberly Turner, and Elizabeth Westby





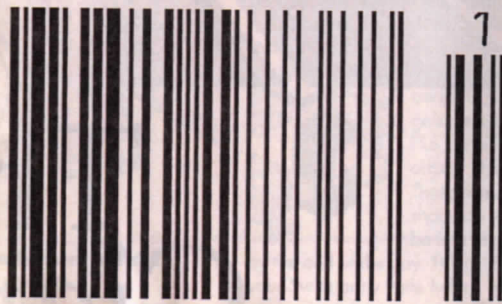
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ATLANTA GA APRIL

**ULTIMATE
GUIDE
TO THE
ATLANTA
AIRPORT**

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The Giant Awakes

BY ELIZABETH WESTBY

It's a quarter till five on Sunday morning at the world's busiest airport, and a man is asleep on the shoeshine chair. With one lanky leg crossed over the other, he looks massive in his high perch, kingly despite his open mouth and the ski cap pulled low over greasy blond curls. In the Atrium, others are sprawled out on the vinyl furniture. Those clutching carry-on bags twitch and toss, those cradling garbage sacks slumber soundly. The lights overhead are bright, relentless.

Outside, a bus stops in front of Terminal North. A stream of navy jackets and tailored vests issues forth and files through the sliding doors. Three men split from the pack and take their post at AirTran curbside check-in. They rock back and forth on their toes and wait, hands stuffed in pockets, for passengers to arrive.

At the security checkpoint, Calandra Jenkins mans the employee line. A pilot flashes his badge and whisks by, followed by a man in a Charley's Steakery hat. Jenkins looks young for

The world's busiest airport never really sleeps: neon lights that never turn off, the ceaseless hum of conveyor belts, escalators, and carousels.

her 25 years and bright-eyed for the hour; she jokes with one TSA rep who comes through, hugs another. A few solitary travelers wander up to the passenger lanes behind her and begin unfastening their watches. A mom pulls the coat off her sleepy-headed son.

Across the way at Seattle's Best, Margaret Nelson has spent an hour readying the shop. A small line of airport employees stands by as the espresso machines whirl in anticipation. Promptly at five, Nelson begins filling orders. A bleary-eyed passenger who just arrived from Las Vegas receives his bagel and sits at the counter. With her easy smile, Nelson nods and responds to his remarks.

The world's busiest airport never really sleeps—some parts of it are antithetical to sleep: neon lights that never turn off; a tinny, masculine voice on an intercom reminding us that the threat level is at orange; the ceaseless hum of conveyor belts, escalators, and carousels. And yet there are worse places to pass the pre-dawn hours. In all its bulk and ugliness, the airport is safe, immovable, and—for those with no place to go at the end of the MARTA line—warm.

Hartsfield-Jackson may be the most important operation in Atlanta; it's certainly the biggest. Nearly 60,000 people are employed here. More than 210,000 people catch flights here daily. In one day, the Atrium Seattle's Best, one of 14 coffee shops in the airport, will sell more than 1,000 coffee drinks. Night is a time for recovery from the day before, preparation for the day ahead.

It's a quarter past five on Sunday morning at the world's busiest airport, and Margaret Nelson, too busy to chat, isn't making a dent in the line for coffee. At the security checkpoint, the passenger line snakes through the retractable barriers. It's still dark outside, but three boisterous laughs can be heard from the AirTran curbside check-in. And in one shoeshine chair, a man stirs, looks around, and descends from his throne.



How to Zip Through Security

"The more passengers prepare for screening, the less time they'll spend at the security checkpoint," says Hartsfield-Jackson TSA spokesman Christopher White. Makes sense, but we all know it's not that simple.

Okay, so the "threat level" is orange. What does that mean to me?

Those color announcements are indications of the kinds of security procedures in use on a given day. The specifics aren't for us to know, as TSA relies on the unpredictability of its processes to thwart bad guys. But basically, the more severe the color level, the earlier you should show up at the airport.

Can I wear a belt through the metal detector?

Shed as much metal as you can, within reason. Yes, your jeans have a metal zipper, but let's stay sane. The metal detector—or magnetometer—measures the aggregate amount of metal on a person. Your belt alone might not set it off, but pair it with a heavy-duty watch, and you're well on your way to being that guy who holds up the line. And nobody wants to be "that guy."



Do I really have to take off my shoes?

Yes. You really do.

Why'd I get pulled aside for extra screening? I'm no thug.

Says White, "There is a random component in it, and there are other factors that I can't really talk too much about. And if a passenger alarms at the metal detector, they're allowed one more pass-through. If they alarm again, they'll go to secondary screening." Buy a one-way or last-minute ticket, and things could also get a bit Orwellian.

Can I bring my lighter/tiny knife/liter of water?

No, no, and no. Lighters and small knives are among the most commonly surrendered items at security checkpoints. The rule regarding liquids, gels, and aerosols (this week) is 3 ounces or less each, in a clear plastic quart-size zip-top bag placed separately on the screening belt.

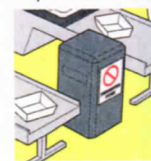
How about my ninja throwing star?

Um, no. What are you doing with that? While you're at it, ditch your ice pick, meat cleaver, sword, cricket bat, pool cue, cattle prod, brass knuckles, nunchucks, Jell-O, pudding, Jell-O pudding, and gel shoe inserts. They're all on the list of prohibited items. Falcons quarterbacks should avoid carrying water bottles with fake compartments.

What happens to my item after TSA confiscates it?

First of all, White would like to point out that it wasn't confiscated; it was surrendered. You could walk your Swiss army knife or lighter back to your car in yonder parking deck if it means that much to you.

Otherwise, surrendered items fall into one of four categories and are disposed of accordingly. Liquids,



aerosols, and gels are treated like normal airport trash. That pricey shampoo will be in a landfill

by the end of the day. Things like your Swiss army knife (which you obviously didn't care enough about to take to your car) are considered "nonhazardous" and are given to Georgia's Surplus Property Division, which disposes of them, sells them on eBay, whatever they want. Hartsfield-Jackson has a national contract for the safe disposal of the third category, hazardous materials (lighters, gasoline, that sort of thing).

Lastly, if you're toting something illegal or dangerous, like a gun, it'll be held by the Atlanta Police Department as evidence in a potential criminal proceeding.



FOOD FOR FLIGHT

WITH MORE THAN 100 PLACES to indulge your appetite at Hartsfield-Jackson, preflight dining can be the culinary equivalent of sipping cocktails in first class or having your knees smashed by the reclining guy in economy. Here's where to find a decent bite to eat in each concourse—and the Atrium.

CONCOURSE	RESTAURANT	WHAT IS IT?	FIRST CLASS	ECONOMY
Atrium	Houlihan's	Sit-down restaurant and bar with classic American food	Between the live piano music and spacious upstairs dining room, it's easy to forget you're at the airport. A simple turkey sandwich or BLT is enhanced by the buttery house-baked focaccia. Triangular plates add a modern touch.	Yes, you can escape the airport rush here. Just don't expect the waiters to rush either.
T	Red Brick Tavern	Sit-down restaurant and bar featuring locally brewed beer	Try the Red Brick Ale or Red Brick Blonde beers, both brewed by the World Beer Cup-winning Atlanta Brewing Company. The waiters are knowledgeable and will allow you to sample your way through the seasonal beer menu.	The bright lights and open layout do little in the way of creating a cozy "tavern" feel.
A	Budweiser Brewhouse	Sports bar an escalator ride up from the main food court; smoking allowed	With its level-two location, Bud paraphernalia, and wall of windows with wooden blinds opening to a view of the planes parked outside, it's an appealing place to get a beer.	Stick to beer. Standard sports-bar fare is served on paper plates with plastic utensils. The burgers have floppy, fast food-style patties, and a bag of Lay's chips replaces fries.
B	Charley's Steakery	Fast-food cheesesteak/sandwich shop	Everything is made to order; watch the contents of your sandwich sizzle on the grill before they're piled, still steaming, onto just-toasted bread. The "gourmet" fries are fresh-cut and flavorful, and you can sample the three kinds of lemonade (raspberry, kiwi, and regular).	Be prepared for a mealtime rush. You may end up eating those gooey cheese and bacon fries in your lap at the gate.
C	Paschal's	Sit-down restaurant and bar offering down-home Southern favorites	The original Paschal's provided a meeting place for civil rights leaders in Atlanta. This outpost provides friendly service, a cool vibe (black-and-white portraits of jazz greats adorn the walls), and, of course, Paschal's Famous Fried Chicken, served piping hot and just begging for its crispy skin to be pulled off with your fingers.	It can't all be perfect; the side salads look (and taste) like they came from a bag, and our Atlanta Breeze cocktail (Midori, peach schnapps, Sprite, and orange juice) was alarmingly similar to a highlighter in color.
D	Sojourner's Lounge	Bar/lounge with very limited food selection; smoking allowed	Okay, so it's not exactly a restaurant, but Sojourner's Lounge has something many airport restaurants lack: character. It's a cozy spot where waitresses josh each other and the walls get a full makeover each holiday. The signature Bloody Mary (with "secret ingredients") is smooth and can be prepared to taste.	Did we mention it's cozy? The closed-in space means the cigarette smoke will sting your eyes. Nonsmokers had better sit at the bar, which provides a more open space but also exposes your back to foot traffic.
E	Nature's Table Bistro	Fast food alternative	The breakfast station churns out hot, made-to-order breakfast burritos, croissants, and biscuits with your choice of eggs, bacon, sausage, or cheese—and gravy if you're so inclined. Healthier options include oatmeal, cereal, and fresh fruit, plus a cold case with sandwiches and several salads.	Keep an eye on your sliced fruit; the kiwi and orange slices may hang on to their peels!



How to Catch Some Zzzzzz's

If you're looking for a sound snooze before a flight, grab your noise-canceling headphones (Brookstone: Atrium, Concourses B, C, E, and T) and a travel pillow (Hudson News: Atrium, Concourses A, B, C, E, T), then hike to Concourse E, the "international" terminal, where the chairs are cushier and roomier, and the sprawl-impeding armrests are less common.



How to Irritate Your Delta Flight Attendant*



A recent survey found that 54 percent of travel employees cite passenger rudeness as a top cause of stress. According to a Delta flight attendant (no, not stewardess, not flying waitress, and certainly not sweet cheeks or hot stuff, thank you very much) who will remain unnamed, some passengers have a real knack for being infuriating. If you wanted to get on the last nerve of these nice people—and, of course, you don't—here's the master plan:

Create the heaviest carry-on you can. Surely you've got some lead or bricks that need to be transported, right? Roll that sucker right up the aisle, then stand helplessly, blocking boarders, as you wait for your 110-pound flight attendant to hoist your gear into the overhead bin. That's why she's here. Kick your shoes off, leaving one protruding slightly into the aisle—because what's funnier than tripping flight crews? That's right . . . nothing. Ask any *America's Funniest Home Videos* viewer. Drop your tray table down and fire up every electronic gadget you own. Hell, bust out a microwave and PlayStation 3, whydoncha? You've got a good four minutes before takeoff.

The "call" button is there so your flight attendants can cater

to your every whim. Lean on it immediately, or try to convey your desires using Morse Code. You're going to need some pillows after all. They're probably beneath your bag of bricks. Wait until he brings them, then send him questing for a blanket—wouldn't want him trying to carry too much at once. Remember that the request to bring your seatback to the upright position is directed at others, not you. Just relax.

The lavatories are most likely to be free when the beverage cart is about midway down the aisle. Ask—no, *tell*—the flight crew to back the cart up to let you through. Ignore the word "PUSH" written on the lavatory door and, instead, start pulling like it's playground tug-of-war and you're a bully with something to prove. When that fails, wander into the galley, hang around long enough to destroy any sense of personal refuge the flight attendants might mistakenly harbor, then loudly ask how the 1&*\$ you open the *&^# bathroom door.

Back at your seat, gulp your beverage, then shake the ice around until a flight attendant returns with a refill, or just grab the skirt or pants of the next one who walks by, never forgetting they're here



to serve your needs. When the food cart arrives, your flight attendant will be happy to hold your meal until such time as you have repacked your microwave and PlayStation.

But hey, doesn't the stuff that vegetarian dude next to you ordered look a bit better than what you've got coming? Yeah. It does. Let the flight attendant

know that you *did* order a special meal. You *absolutely positively* requested one when you booked. He'll find a way to make it happen.

Landing already? Man, do these lucky flight crews have an easy gig.

*Also likely to be effective on other airlines.

HARTSFIELD-JACKSON BY THE NUMBERS

75
Percentage of passenger volume from Delta

5.8 million
Total area of the terminal complex in square feet

210,700
Average number of passengers daily

2,600
Number of flights daily

55,300
Approximate number of employees



\$289,342,426
Revenue for 2005



4,700
Total area in acres



121 million
Estimated passengers in 2015



3,400
Estimated daily flights in 2015



176
Number of gates



David Alex Hill



Dr. Yousuf Khalifa

Land of the Free?

I

MAGINE BEING QUESTIONED, DETAINED, and searched every time you went to the airport, forced to reveal personal information about your family members, even required to remove your clothing. Now imagine that it's all because of something as simple as your name or religion. How far should we go in the name of national security? And where is the line between vigilance and paranoia? We talked with two Hartsfield-Jackson passengers about their experiences.

DAVID ALEX HILL traveled regularly on business. One day, he got an odd message when trying to check in on his computer. Flying was never the same again. Here is his story:

About two and a half years ago, some goober, somewhere, decided to use David Hill either as a real name or an alias, and that person is on the watch list. I went to check in and my computer said I had to go inside [at the airport]. I called, and the woman hesitated, then said, "Um, I'm sorry sir, but I can't give you any additional information." Later, I tried to check in at curbside, and the guy took me inside to the front of the line and handed the woman my ID. She came back with a gentleman who did not have an airport nametag—very much looked like your stereotypical Fed. He asked my name, where I lived,

how long I had lived there. So I'm like, "What is going on?" And he said something to the effect of, "I'm asking the questions." We went through this litany of questions. He handed back my information, left, and came back 20 minutes later. They printed my boarding pass and off I went. On the way back, I was detained again, even more rudely, for even longer. I was getting irritated. He said, "Look, we're just doing our job. You can answer the questions and go on your merry way, otherwise we're gonna lock you up."

A week later at curbside, it's the same thing. I said, "What is going on? I've been flying for 25 years." The guy says, "Sir, you're on the watch list," to which I replied, "What watch list?" Turns out, there's a list of suspected terrorists or people of interest to the government. It's reminiscent of McCarthyism. I've never committed a crime, never been arrested. You'd think I'd sail right through.

To this day, I can't check in without trouble. You're never off the list—that's what they told me, anyway. It's easy to get discouraged and easy to see why tempers flare. The people on the other side are not very good at communicating. The stress of travel is bad enough, then you add this. I don't fly any more than I have to.

[Hill is Atlanta Magazine's advertising director.]

DR. YOUSUF KHALIFA is a resident at the Medical College of Georgia; an American, born and raised; and a father. The kind of guy you'd want as a neighbor. He's also Muslim, and once he steps into the airport, that's the only thing security seems to care about. Here is his story:

I always get a red "X" on my boarding pass, and I have to go through special lines. Before September 11, I never noticed anything like this, but it's gotten pretty bad. Coming back from Egypt in January, a customs offi-

cial asked for my social security number, my address, my wife's social security, what she does, my daughter's social security, date of birth—you know, things that make you kind of worried. Why do you need my daughter's information? She's two and a half years old. It gets you really antsy. Then they ask for your father's and brother's information—"What's your brother's address in Houston?"—and it's like, what exactly is going on here? They said, "You've been randomly selected." I said, "Okay." I mean, what else can I say?

Getting a red "X" on your boarding pass means going through a certain security line.

There's a special metal detector and X-ray, and they check your bag for explosives. When I'm coming into the country, my bags are inspected by hand. And I'm questioned.

I was basically strip-searched flying back to Atlanta from Amsterdam. They told me to take off my pants. "We have to examine the inside of your pants." And, "Show us everything that's in your bag." They told me I was on some sort of list, so back in Atlanta I asked, "Is there a list that I'm on?" And they said, "No, you're not on any list." I can't get any answers.

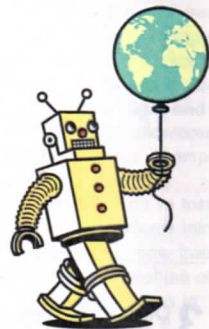
I think the public has a misperception of Muslims

from the media. You never hear that Muslims are positive members of their communities. It only comes out that someone is Muslim if he does something bad. You have shows like 24 where the Muslim father is a lawyer, the mother is a physician, yet they are an underground terror cell. I think the media have done a disservice in that regard.

[Dr. Khalifa's mother, Soumaya Khalifa, is the executive director of Atlanta's Islamic Speakers Bureau, an outreach organization that educates individuals and organizations about working with Muslim Americans. Among the presentations it offers is a training course for law enforcement officials. Visit isbatlanta.org to learn more.]

Getting a red "X" on your boarding pass means going through a certain security line. When I'm coming into the country, my bags are inspected by hand. And I'm questioned.

Top Three Signs That Robots Are Taking Over the World



1 Concourse T's automated Burger King: Punch in your own order, insert payment, then get change from a machine before receiving your burger from a human.

2 iPod vending machines: Insert \$349 (plus tax) into the vending machine and a robotic arm gently delivers your mp3 player. The Concourse A machine alone had sales of \$55,000 in one month.

3 Downloadable video games: Thanks to a partnership between Delta and Nintendo, fans of the Nintendo DS (a portable gaming system) can download game demos simply by standing within a few feet of one of the six download stations in Concourses T, A, and B.

BELOW THE BELT

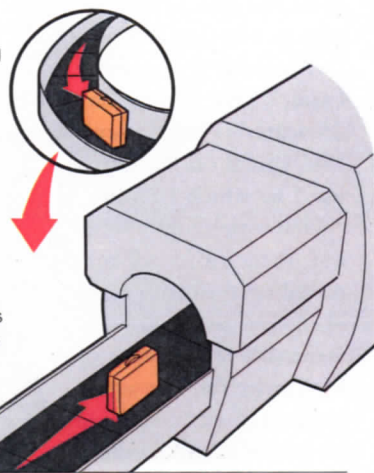
PERCEPTIVE TRAVELERS MAY HAVE NOTICED a little more breathing room around Hartsfield-Jackson's ticket counters lately. Credit goes to the airport's in-line baggage-screening system, which went live last year and rids the lobby of detection systems that took up precious space, demanded twice the manpower, and exposed inspectors to noisy and nosy customers. (Passengers now leave their bags with ticket agents instead of wheeling them over to a TSA rep.) Touted as "post-September 11 security" with "pre-September 11 convenience," the \$170 million system is among the largest of its kind in the country.

Just beneath the feet of busy travelers heaving suitcases onto scales, more than five miles of conveyor belts wind through 24 explosives-detection checkpoints. Here's what happens to your bag when you're not looking:

1 An airline ticket agent attaches a sticker with a tracking barcode to the checked bag, which is then dropped onto a conveyor belt behind the counter. This belt is connected to the in-line system downstairs.



2 The bag emerges through a hole in the basement's ceiling and follows the belt through an explosives-detection system that uses CAT scan 3-D technology to analyze the contents. If cleared, the bag is sent to the makeup area, where it is placed on the proper baggage tractor and carted off to its plane. If it contains a suspicious-looking item or something that's too dense to view properly, the machine sends the image to the onscreen resolution room (OSR).



3 Officers stationed at computer monitors in the OSR have 45 seconds to decide whether the item in question warrants physical inspection. Bags deemed harmless are waved on to the makeup area; no one has touched them but the ticket agent. Bags containing threatening or ambiguous items are routed to the physical inspection site.



4 Inspectors search the bag, aided by a computer image showing the precise location of the suspicious item. Most of the time, they find dense household objects such as jars of tomato sauce or stacks of magazines, but one surprised inspector discovered an icebox full of shrimp headed for an overseas flight. If the item doesn't pose a threat, the inspector repacks the bag and leaves a note informing the owner of the search. If the item is a bomb, inspectors seal it in a special containment unit or, as its size may dictate, run for cover.



How to Fly Like the Other Half

Delta's Platinum Medallion members (who must earn 75,000 Medallion Qualification Miles in one year) are rewarded with:

- * Access to first class or BusinessElite check-in areas, even when not traveling in business or first class
- * Access to frequent traveler security lines
- * Priority boarding and

baggage handling on international flights of six hours or more

- * Unlimited, automatic, complimentary upgrades for you and your traveling companion on flights to many destinations
- * Priority wait-list status
- * Waived fees for redeeming, reissuing, or re-depositing SkyMiles used for Award

Travel

- * Discounted membership to the Crown Room Club (\$125 or 40,000 miles)
- * Access to international Crown Room Clubs regardless of ticket class
- * Preferred seating in coach/economy class
- * 100 percent mileage bonuses on every flight (double miles)
- * The Special Member Services phone number—for-

get being on hold for hours; the magic number on your card ensures instant satisfaction.

AirTran doesn't have a VIP lounge or all of Delta's perks. "It's part of our low-cost carrier model," says company spokesperson Judy Graham-Weaver. But frequent flyers with **Elite** status (A+

Rewards members who earn 20 or more flight credits in a 90-day period or 50 credits in a 365-day period) do get these perks:

- * Waived change and cancellation fees on select fares
- * Free business class upgrades
- * Priority boarding
- * Special check-in and security lines
- * Advance seat assignment



Q+A

Brigitte Lewkowicz, Front Line Manager, Atlanta Airport Traffic Control Tower

BY JAY BUSBEE

HARTSFIELD-JACKSON's Air Traffic Control tower is responsible for a chunk of airspace extending roughly five miles from the center of the airport and 4,000 feet up—as well as for the 2,500 planes that fly through it every day. But unlike the movies, where control towers are hives of barely controlled chaos, Hartsfield-Jackson's tower is calm, collected, even, dare we say, boring. And that's exactly how we want it.

How many people work in the tower at a time? We start with 11 on the day shift and 12 on the evening. We'd like to have a few more . . . but we've got an aging workforce. Most who were hired in 1981 [when President Reagan fired the nation's striking air traffic controllers] are coming up on 25 years, making them eligible to retire. We're getting new people . . . but it's a process. [Nationwide, the FAA is in the second year of its 10-year plan to hire 12,000 controllers.]

How does the control tower break down the responsibility? If you took a pie and cut it into pieces, you'd delegate a piece to one particular controller. [Hartsfield-Jackson] is a controller's

dream; each controller has the responsibility for one of those runways.

What's the most stressful time in the tower? Even if it's not a peak time, if you've got high winds in New York, snow in Chicago, if it's a July evening and there are thunderstorms rolling in—that can be stressful. But for the most part, being the parent of an almost 16-year-old daughter is more stressful on any given day.

So is the day before Thanksgiving as chaotic in the tower as it is in the concourses? No. We've come to expect that kind of traffic. We're staffed for it. There is a fine group of men and women that do this job. There are days when I can go around the tower and count more than 100 years of Atlanta tower time working. When you're here, you're in the Mecca of air traffic control.

What's the strangest thing that you've witnessed? Ever seen a UFO? No UFOs. In Flint, Michigan, an aircraft that was inbound to land suddenly said, "I'm running out of gas." He ended up landing on an interstate. It was almost surreal in that he was flying, and then he wasn't.

How to Kill Five Hours

Help! It's pouring outside and the 18,756 songs on your iPod are getting old fast. Here are a few activities to make time fly when your plane can't.



BROWSE: Permanent and rotating art displays dot the airport, but Concourse E is a hotspot, with a children's gallery, a collection of more than 150 pieces by Georgia artists, and 23 freestanding cases programmed by airport art managers, the Center for Puppetry Arts, the Atlanta History Center, the High, and others. (Visit atlantamagazine.com for a complete list of airport art.)

SHINE: You've tossed those nice oxfords into a plastic tub, now treat them to a shoeshine at one of the stations in Concourse A or B.

RENT: At InMotion Pictures, a movie rental shop in Concourses A, B, C, and E, you can rent a DVD and portable player for \$15. Enjoy a blockbuster at the gate.

WALK: Okay, stand. Let the moving walkway do the work as you ride it from one end of the underground "transportation mall" to the other. Because you can.

LEAF: Expand your mind—or get your gossip fix—by reading a magazine at one of the airport newsstands.

GAZE: The long concourses face each other, eliminating runway views from most windows. Trek to the northern or southern tip of your terminal to watch planes speed down the runway and into the clouds.

PAMPER: Concourse C's Xpress Spa (opening soon) is built for walk-ins with rigid schedules. Waxing, nail services, foot massages, and stress and tension eliminators are available.



Fear of Flying 101

BY HOLLIS GILLESPIE

Years ago, before the shaky toilet spin the airlines undertook post-9/11, I was hired as a flight attendant for a major Atlanta-based airline and spent a month at its in-flight training program, more aptly known as “Barbie Boot Camp.” One day, we got to simulate the survival plan set in place for us should our plane ever crash into the ocean. Back then, even in that bleak scenario, our survival was simply assumed.

That day, we trainees were allowed to deploy an L-1011 life raft in the Olympic-sized pool built on the premises for that very purpose. Even then, indoors, with all of us bone-dry,



without so much as a breeze to rock us, we were about as effective at erecting that raft canopy as newborn baboons trying to repair a pocket watch. Again and again, our instructors had to tell us to refer to our manuals, because in our manuals, every-



How to Get a Job at the Airport

So the Hawks can slam-dunk and you can't. Ever stop to think of what they can't do? All but three are too tall to be flight attendants. George Dubya Bush flew an F-102 for the Texas Air National Guard, but the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) wouldn't allow him to be an air traffic controller. He's too old. Another president, Bill Clinton, couldn't work as a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) screener. He's color-blind. Hartsfield-Jackson employs about 55,300 people, with a payroll of \$2.4 billion. What does it take to be one of them?

*** Squeaky-clean living:** TSA screeners, air traffic controllers, and flight attendants require a criminal background check,

proof of citizenship, drug screening, and an English proficiency test. TSA officers also undergo a credit check.

*** Youth:** Controllers

must enter the FAA training program before turning 31 and retire at 56.

*** The right body:** Airlines want flight attendants without visible tattoos, piercings, or crazy hair. The FAA's height standard requires a reach of at least 77 inches—to access overhead storage—but most airlines are more specific, usually not over 6'2" with a healthy weight.

*** Training:** Controllers complete specialized de-

grees at one of 14 colleges offering the program. (The nearest are in Florida and Tennessee.) Screeners complete 56–72 hours of classroom training, 112–128 hours of on-the-job training, and a certification exam. Flight attendants undergo stringent programs focusing on safety. Delta's 400,000-square-foot Atlanta training facility features a live-fire-training pit, a motion-based simulator, seven cabin mock-ups, and more.

one escapes. Everyone survives.

This assumption is mostly attributable to the plane wrecks that had come before us. Until then, all evacuation and survival strategies were based on what had gone wrong in those cases. For example, if you're ever on one of those low-cost airlines that fly ancient planes that have been pastured by the big names—planes like DC-9s that are more than 30 years old, or 727s, which are almost as archaic—take note of the raised Braille-like symbols intermittently dotting the strip that runs just beneath the overhead bins. Those were put there so passengers could feel their way out of a smoke-filled cabin if necessary, as each raised symbol indicates an exit row. It took a plane wreck to discover that this practice is completely unfeasible. Simply put: Smoke rises, and the last place a passenger should be after a crash is standing up with his head in the billowing black cloud, groping around like an albatross while roasting his own lungs.

So that idea hit the ground faster than wet cement, and it was the failure of this policy that led to the next, which was to install indicator lights along the aisle floor. "White lights lead to red lights, and red lights lead to exits," we spouted in our safety announcements, diligently pointing to the ground in a two-fingered sweeping motion as if doing a bad rendition of the seventies robot dance. I suppose those lights worked fine until the next crash, when it was discovered that, while smoke rises, noxious burning chemical fumes sink. It does not benefit a passenger to grovel along the floor after impact, looking for indicator lights only to breathe in poisonous fumes and flop around like a big trout, thereby blocking the aisle and screwing it up for everybody behind him.

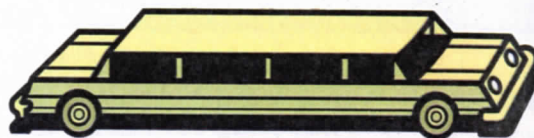
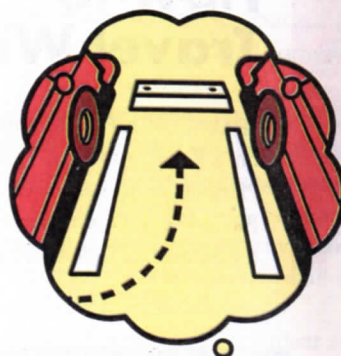
So now the indicator lights are at arm-rest level, and it is the very optimistic belief of the industry that, after a plane wrecks, while the overhead is filled with smoke and the floor is seeped in fumes, there will be a lovely, meadow-like middle area where survivors can discern their way out of the burning fuselage by following the beckoning lights. Maybe it works, maybe it doesn't.

If you want to know what I do, it's this: I count rows. That's it. Before takeoff, I count the rows behind me to the nearest exit, then I count those in front of me to the nearest exit. If that plane crashes and I'm still alive—and I expect to be—I can close my eyes, hold my breath, and feel my way out as simply as that. I can kick-everyone-else-in-the-head, get-outta-my-damn-way, blood-gushing-from-my-shoulder feel my way off the plane. Because if there's one thing you should be able to walk away with after a tough career in the rocky world of the airline industry, it's the assumption that you'll survive.

ILLUSTRATION: PETER HOEY

How to Find a Parking Spot

Hartsfield-Jackson has 29,550 public parking spots, with another 1,200 on the way, so it pays to plan ahead. Here's what you should know:



* **Hourly parking** is located right in front of each terminal and costs \$1 an hour for the first two hours; \$2 an hour for the next four; or \$28 per day after the first six hours. Perfect for when you're dashing in to pick up Aunt Mabel.

* **Economy parking** lots are next door to the closer, pricier parking decks. They're a bargain at \$10 per day (or \$2 an hour) and feature a courtesy shuttle cart service.

* **Daily parking** lots provide covered spots directly across from each terminal for two bucks an hour or \$14 per day. Park here when you've got no time to waste.

* **Park-Ride Lots** are serviced by the airport's hive of 50 shuttles, which run every three to five minutes. At \$9 per day, these lots, located a couple miles from the terminal, are even more economical than the economy lots. Make reservations online or call 866-922-PARK. While all airport lots have spots for passengers with disabilities, the Park-Ride lots are the best option if you've got a high-top van more than 8 feet tall. The shuttles are wheelchair accessible.

* **The Gold Reserve Lot** is the airport's version of rock star parking. Just steps from the Terminals with its own private entrance and exit, this lot promises a space in the reserved parking area and "no waiting in line." The price of \$3 for the first hour, \$1 each additional hour, up to \$24 per day, seems like a bargain until you read the fine print. Setting up an account requires advance payment of \$200 along with a \$15 card setup fee and an "annual minimum usage fee" of \$288. A Silver Reserve Lot is being added soon for those who want the

high life without the high payments.

* **Good to know:** Airport Parking Courtesy Assistance Services provides free jump starts, flat-tire repair, tire inflation, and vehicle location assistance in the airport-owned lots above. The airport also plans to add a state-of-the-art system that will provide real-time displays of the number of available spaces on each deck.

Privately run off-site lots are another option. Most are open 24 hours, have shuttle services, and offer online reservations. Park 'N Fly is the closest, about half a mile away, with a daily rate of \$11.50, plus special weekly, senior, and AAA rates. Park 'N Fly Plus takes service a step further by offering car-wash and oil-change amenities and is the only lot with valet parking—until the airport launches its valet service later this year. The Parking Spot is three miles away but offers both covered (\$12.50 per day) and open-air (\$8.50 per day) parking. Check parknfly.com and theparkingspot.com for online discounts and coupons before leaving home.

Too many choices? **Take MARTA.** It is, ahem, smarta, and for \$1.75 it'll drop you off just outside baggage claim. Monday through Friday, use it from 5 a.m. until 1 a.m.; Saturdays, 6 a.m. until the last train leaves the airport at 1:05 a.m.; Sundays and holidays, 6 a.m. until the last train at 12:46 a.m. Long-term parking is available at several MARTA stations (Lindbergh Center, North Springs, Doraville, and College Park for \$7 per day; Lenox, Dunwoody, Sandy Springs, Brookhaven, and Kensington for \$4 per day).

How to Travel With . . .

SNAKES ON A PLANE, Shih Tzus on a Plane, Your Grandma on a Plane, and even That Annoying Guy Next to You on a Plane have horror movie potential, however poorly realized. But if you follow this survival guide, you won't have to wait for Samuel L. Jackson to show up and save the day.



	BEFORE YOU GO	AT THE GATE	IN THE AIR	IN THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO
Small children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Fly early in the morning. You'll get more help from flight attendants and feel less stressed. * When booking, alert the airline that you're traveling with a small child. * Pack extra clothes. Traveling in vomit-encrusted attire is unpleasant at any age. * Pack a variety of snacks and tuck away a few new toys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * If flying Delta or AirTran, take advantage of the play areas (concourses A, B, C, and T). If they play hard now, they might sleep later. * Walk the child through everything that is going to happen. Board early, and ask for a tour of the cockpit (and some pilot wings). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Try to get them to sleep. * Give them a bottle or something else to suck on during takeoff and landing to help their ears adjust to the altitude. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bribery works wonders.
Rude seatmates and space hogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * At check-in, choose the "change seats" option on the kiosk. Choose a row with multiple seats available. An empty seat can't elbow you in the side. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Savor your last moments of solitude. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Avoid eye contact, and appear deeply involved in a book or magazine. * Fake a contagious illness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Pretend to go to the bathroom, then ask a flight attendant if there are any open seats.
Your grandparents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Fly early in the morning. * Reserve a wheelchair at the departure, connection, and arrival airports, and use it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Board early, and inform flight attendants of any medical conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * If they're inexperienced flyers, explain everything as it happens, and remind them that turbulence is normal. Panic could trigger a medical emergency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Disown your family.
Nervous flyers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Research airplane safety and discuss your findings. * Alert the airline that you're traveling with a panicky flyer. "Flight attendants are trained to go talk to them and keep them busy," says Judy Graham-Weaver, AirTran spokesperson. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Talk to the crew. "It will make the passenger feel more in control," says Anthony Black, Delta spokesperson. "The pilots will come out, and they're more than happy to answer your questions." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Keep them busy and distracted, or try to get them to sleep. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Gently point out the obvious: They're already in the air, and there's no backing out.
Small pets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Check the airline's weight restrictions and health certificate requirements to make sure your animal is allowed in the cabin. * Put the carrier or kennel in a prominent spot at home, with a favorite toy, a few weeks before the trip, recommends Marc Morrison, owner of Animal Land Pet Movers. * For international travel, check with the U.S. Embassy in your destination country for regulations. Even a small oversight could cause your pet to be quarantined for months. * Don't feed your pet for at least six hours before the flight. * Bring toys and a water dish. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Buy a water bottle once you're past security. * Even if your pet is agitated, do not sedate him, says Morrison. Most tranquilizers are unsafe at higher altitudes and may obstruct breathing. Often, animals will go to sleep on their own after takeoff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Although most airlines require animals to stay in their carriers or kennels, many flight crews will allow you to take a well-behaved pet out for a while during the flight. Just make sure you aren't seated next to someone who's allergic to or not fond of animals. * Etiquette dictates that you should mention your fuzzy buddy to your seatmate before the flight begins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * If your dog or cat assumes the position, "skedaddle back to the bathroom and cover him with your shirt," Morrison says. But in-flight tinkling is rarely a problem, even on transcontinental flights, he says.



Ewww! Cooties!

BY CHANDRA R. THOMAS

The closer you get to the front of the line, the more it feels like an amateur strip-tease competition—jackets yanked off and belts jerked from pants; laptops pulled from cases; cell phones, jewelry, and hairclips clanking into the gray bins, now filled with potentially troublesome adornments. As you approach the security checkpoint, there's only one task left: It's time to get footloose!

Amazed, you watch other passengers (many of whom would hop themselves into a one-legged tizzy before allowing their precious tootsies to so much as graze the gym locker room

floor) casually barefoot it across what is probably the most heavily traveled area in the world's busiest airport. More than 40,000 passengers from all corners of the planet traverse the security area every day.

Post-9/11 America has its perils and responsibilities, and thanks to delinquents like "shoe bomber" Richard Reid, those now include practically stripping down to your skivvies just to board a flight to, say, Savannah. Attempting to stay on top of homeland security is commendable and all, but have you ever considered all the disgusting germs on Hartsfield-Jackson's floor?

Veteran microbiologist Gopal Batra, president and CEO of Biosystems Atlanta, hadn't—until we asked him about the pesky pathogens that could be hiding there. Batra, who has a Ph.D. in microbiology and has worked with the Department of Agriculture, uses words like "staphylococcus" and "bacterium Escherichia Coli" (aka E. coli) while brainstorming about the cooties that could be playing hide-and-seek in the crevices of your foot as you walk through.

Don't let those glistening floors fool you. According to Batra, it's likely that fungi, yeast, bacteria, and molds—some of which could make you sick—are lurking in such a heavy-traffic area. The company contracted to clean Hartsfield-Jackson's floors didn't respond when asked how often the area is washed.

"I don't mean to be an alarmist, but hundreds of thousands of people are passing through that area, and there should be a level of concern because we don't know the health of all these people," notes Batra. "If someone were sick, he or she could very well contaminate the floor, and all those people walking barefoot could pick up some of the potentially harmful microorganisms. With all those different people boarding airplanes for all over the world, these germs could conceivably be carried thousands of miles, from continent to continent. It's definitely something the CDC and state health department should be monitoring."

Though not life-threatening, many common pathogens likely to be found on the airport floor can have ill effects, particularly for children and others with compromised immune systems. Penicillium, for example, can cause allergic reactions in those prone to rashes and allergies, the mold stachybotrys chartarum can cause respiratory problems, and fecal-related bacteria can cause diarrhea and stomach ailments. At least at the gym, your biggest concern is a bad case of athlete's foot.

Aside from encouraging airports to provide "impervious booties" (not a bad idea according to Batra), he says there isn't much law-abiding travelers can do, other than wear socks to reduce "skin-to-skin" contact with potentially harmful microorganisms.

"Just be aware that the floor may be contaminated, and try not to walk barefoot as much as possible," advises Batra. "Because the skin is a living tissue, it is more likely to harbor pathogens. With socks, those pathogens are less likely to remain alive, and that'll greatly decrease the amount of risk."



Delta Crown Room Club interior; right: view from inside



BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

WITH NAMES LIKE THE “President’s Club” and the “Red Carpet Club,” it’s obvious that exclusivity is key for airline VIP lounges. We know about the complimentary sodas, coffee, snacks, and tea. And we’ve heard talk of business services ranging from WiFi to dataports, fax machines, and conference rooms. But what *else* is behind those doors, and how can we get in? Here’s the lowdown on Hartsfield-Jackson’s six VIP lounges:

AMERICAN AIRLINES ADMIRALS CLUB GATE T-10

GETTING IN: Admirals Club members (yearly fee: \$450 or 70,000 miles; discounted for frequent flyers) and first- and business-class ticketholders.

One-day passes: \$50 (\$75 for two people)

PERKS INCLUDE: *Food and alcoholic beverages for purchase *FedEx drop-off and pickup services *Complimentary membership to Regus’ Global Network of 750 business centers *Access for two guests or family members

BRITISH AIRWAYS TERRACES LOUNGE GATE E-26

GETTING IN: Gold or Silver Executive Club members (must have

traveled on a qualifying full-fare flight or use British Airways credit card) and FIRST, Club World, Club Europe, or BA Connect ticketholders.

PERKS INCLUDE: *Free drinks at the World Wine bar *Showers

CONTINENTAL AIRLINES PRESIDENT’S CLUB BETWEEN GATES D-12 AND D-13

GETTING IN: President’s Club members (fee: \$425; discounted for frequent flyers) and Business First ticketholders.

One-day passes: \$45
PERKS INCLUDE: *Complimentary alcoholic beverages *Agent assistance with reservations, seat assignments, and ticketing *Magazines and newspapers *Entry to Delta’s Crown Room Clubs

*Access for two guests and family members

DELTA AIR LINES CROWN ROOM CLUB AND BUSINESS ELITE LOUNGES

EIGHT LOCATIONS (GATES A-17, A-CENTER-POINT, B-10, B-25, C-26, E-14, E-15, T-6)

GETTING IN: Crown Room Club members (fee: \$450 or 70,000 miles; discounted for frequent flyers) and business- or first-class ticketholders. Passes, valid day of travel only: \$25

PERKS INCLUDE: *Putting green (Concourse T) *Delta agent assistance *Complimentary drinks from a fully stocked bar *Satellite TV *Access to partner airlines’ (Continental and Northwest) VIP lounges *Periodicals *Access for family

members and two guests

TIP: *Atlanta Magazine’s* February 2006 Romance Issue cited a Crown Room membership as the best dating investment you can make. What better place to meet successful, professional singles?

LUFTHANSA AIRLINES SENATOR LOUNGE CONCOURSE E

GETTING IN: HON Circle members, Senator cardholders, Star Gold cardholders and first-class ticketholders

PERKS INCLUDE: *Local and international magazines and newspapers *Television *Entrance to partner Star Alliance lounges (United Airlines)

UNITED AIRLINES

RED CARPET CLUB BETWEEN GATES T-13 AND T-14

GETTING IN: Red Carpet Club members (fee: \$500 or 70,000 miles for general members; discounted for frequent flyers) and business- or first-class ticketholders.

Day passes: \$50

PERKS INCLUDE: *Alcoholic beverages for purchase *Entrance to partner Star Alliance lounges (Lufthansa)

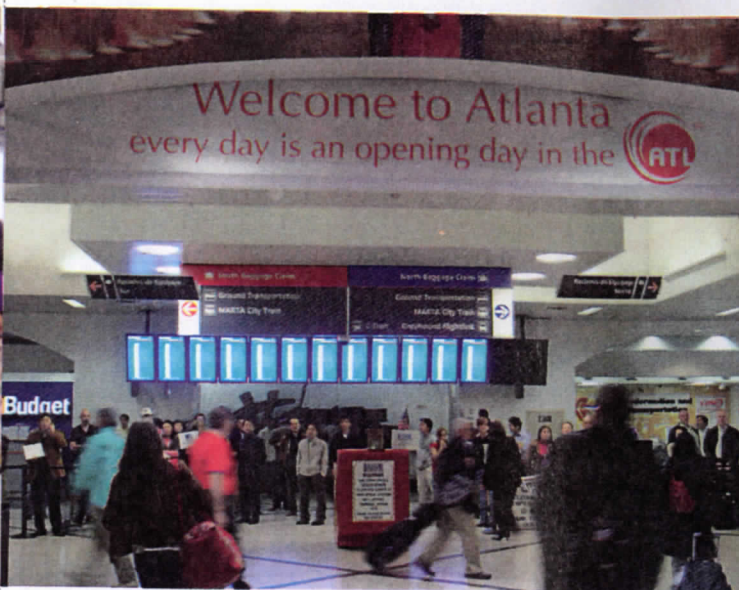
GOOD TO KNOW: So much for “It’s 5 o’clock somewhere.” If you’re a nervous traveler with an early flight, you might want to remember your medication or cigarettes instead of relying on a Crown Room Bloody Mary—Georgia state law prohibits serving alcohol before 9 a.m.



Better Late Than Never

From avoiddelays.com: As of January 2006, 26.6 percent of flights arriving into Atlanta were delayed, along with 24.6 percent departing. From 9 to 9:59 p.m., the percentage jumped to a whopping 35.3 percent of arriving flights!

PHOTOGRAPHY: JUDY BAXTER



The Space Between

BY AMANDA K. BROWN

Whether the passengers—fresh from touching down in pushed tin from L.A. or Amsterdam or Fort Sill, Oklahoma, or any other myriad meetings of longitude and latitude—realize it or not, they are

being watched. Watched by a crowd of us cordoned off about 15 feet away. We have been waiting for them.

On either side of the bathrooms, we wait, spilling outside the lines of black plastic stanchions and flat nylon straps separating us from the waves of humanity cresting over the tops of the escalators. Men and women, young and old, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, children, grandparents, cousins, friends, lovers—the climate of a previous position revealed in a sunburned pate or lined boot—pass the sentry-like TSA agents, cross the red slash on the floor marked “Do Not Enter,” and clot before

us. Some are studying the signs directing them toward Terminal South (Delta!) and Terminal North (not Delta!) baggage claims. Some scurry desperately for the bathrooms we block. And some search our faces as intently as we search theirs.

They see our poised cameras and bobbing balloons and homemade signs and single roses wrapped in green tissue paper purchased for \$3.99 at the adjacent Hudson News. In a matter of seconds, a smile of recognition breaks, and it becomes the moment they have been waiting for since first placing their faith in the miraculous balance of lift, weight, thrust, and drag that allows an 870,000-pound 747 carrying hundreds of people to travel thousands of miles. A hearty handshake—“Son!”—a run, a skip, a jump, a scoop, a hug, a kiss, or an embrace that doesn’t break follows, every few minutes, like clockwork.

Those of us still waiting clap along with USO volunteers to honor returning soldiers or laugh with customer service representative Don Braddock, whose enthusiastic greetings act includes the always-panic-inducing “Welcome to Miami!” We wait for the line of 14 flat-screen monitors behind us, which display the status of hundreds of flights, to tell us when our turn will come. One by one, our loved ones’ “on time” flights flash to “in range” as they scar the sky above the city with their descent. We shift our weight, right left, left right, twirl hair, bite nails, jockey for position.

Victor rubs the two strings of his Old Navy hoodie rapidly between his cold, clammy hands as if trying to start a fire. He has been here since 2:30 p.m. (*to beat the traffic*), but now it’s 7:30, and Amy, a childhood (*but hopefully, soon, more than a*) friend is stuck on the tarmac in a traffic jam. He paces, goes out for a cigarette, and then marches back to the information desk to demand some sort of answer. He has not seen Amy in three and a half years.

My wait, it hasn’t been as long—only nine days—but I go to check my lipstick just the same. ✨