

# Tips, Tactics, Tools and *Soothing Meditations* for the **Traveling Hunter/Shooter**



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# Bill Miller's Travel Philosophy

- Over-PLAN.
- Over-PREPARE.
- Know more than they do, but don't flaunt it.
- Kill them with kindness.
  
- **MOST IMPORTANT:** "It's better to be on the ground wishing you were in the air than in the air wishing you were on the ground."

# Good Attitude Will Get You Far

Ask yourself: “Is the goal of your travel to get from Point A to Point B with your stuff intact or is the purpose of your trip to change the world and everyone in it?”

- Be prepared.
  - Have all the right documents in hand when you get into line.
  - Know exactly where everything is in your checked bags and your carry-on bags
- Be positive – SMILE, make conversation, but don't joke around
- Ask questions, don't accuse.
  - Too many travelers (especially hunters it sometimes seems) go to the airport looking for confrontation
- If you feel you must ask for a supervisor, but do it politely.
- Say “please” and “thank you” and “yes sir” and “no ma'am.”
- Like any business airlines have the right to deny service to anyone and in some cases more right.
- When all else fails resort to the most important philosophy--
  - It's better to be on the ground wishing you were in the air than in the air wishing you were on the ground!

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# **Airline Travel with Firearms and Ammunition**

- Know the players – each has its own rules
  - Airlines
  - Transportation Safety Administration (TSA)
  - Customs (country to which you're traveling and U.S.)
  - Immigration (country to which you're traveling and U.S.)

# Conforming to Airline/TSA Firearms and Ammunition Regulations

1. No firearms, firearms parts or ammunition can be carried aboard a commercial airline flight **(DUH!)**.
2. For airline travel firearms must be in airline approved, locking hard side case. [NALPAK Tuffpak http://www.nalpak.com/TuffpakSportCases](http://www.nalpak.com/TuffpakSportCases)
  - If you're using a long flat case with multiple latches and locking points, each must have a lock on it such that when closed and locked no portion of the lid can be pried open enough for fingers to reach inside.
3. Firearms must be unloaded.
  - You may or may not be asked to “show” the ticketing agent the gun is unloaded.
  - You will be required to sign a form that vows the gun is unloaded.
    - In U.S. that form is locked inside the gun case.
    - In Canada it is a form in quadruplicate with copies going many directions.
    - TSA will re-inspect the firearm to ensure it is unloaded (in most airports of any size this is done via X-ray; in small airports don't worry) and they will do one or more explosives inspections which will involve opening the case.

4. In U.S. and Canada, you cannot check more than 11 pounds (5 kilograms) of ammunition.
5. Ammunition is best transported in it's "original packaging" – the way you bought it at retail.
  - I put "original packaging" inside some kind of hard side box in my duffle. <http://www.flambeauoutdoors.com/hunting/default.asp?p=Details&i=1408&fp=1>
  - I pack box on top of my duffle so it's easy, convenient to inspect.
  - Duffle bag should be lockable with TSA conforming locks.
  - Absolutely NO loose ammo in jacket pocket, shell vest, shell belt, etc.
6. Have your ammo packaged per airline and TSA regulations, but easily accessible for them to inspect – not secondary lock.
7. If possible have your gun case locked with TSA conforming locks.
8. Make sure you have identification inside and outside of your case
  - I.D. outside the case can be concealed, but should be accessible to airlines, TSA or Customs if necessary (consider office addresses rather than home addresses).
  - I.D. inside the case can be as simple a business card (this is not required, but is an extremely good practice).

# Flying with Muzzleloading Gear

- DON'T DO IT
  - It's illegal to fly black powder or substitutes on commercial flights.
  - It's illegal to fly primers or percussion caps as components on commercial flights.
  - Even though bullets are inert, you're in for trouble as soon as an airline agent or TSA agent hears or sees the word "bullets."
- PLAN AHEAD
  - Make arrangements at location to purchase components on the way to camp.
  - Have guide or outfitter buy components for you. If you go this route triple check to ensure they get what you need.
  - You may be able to order components from cataloger like Cabela's well ahead of trip and have them shipped to camp or outfitter.

# Inconsistency Abounds

- Airlines' "firearms handling surcharges."
- Allowable number of firearms per case, per passenger.
- Where to pack the ammunition.
- What "accessory" gear is allowable in checked baggage?
- Are trigger locks required? When? Where?
- Should guns be together or disassembled?
- Who can carry the gun case and baggage containing ammunition to TSA for inspection?
- Different airports differ regarding ID, pick up, etc.
- Some airports, some agents are simply more "hunter" friendly than others.
- Different agents interpret regulations differently.

# 5 Tips to Help Ensure You and Guns/Ammo Show Up in the Same Place at the Same Time

1. When traveling with guns/ammo get to the airport a MINIMUM of two hours ahead of scheduled flight.
2. Never book initial flights or connections on the last flight of the day.
3. Before you walk away from the ticket counter, confirm for yourself and with the agent that your baggage tags and your baggage claim stubs show the correct information for your destination airport.
4. Follow your bags for as long as possible. Watch the ticket agent put your bag on the belt and watch it go through the door. Watch the TSA agent inspect your gun case, relock it and put it on the conveyor. Then watch it go through the door.
5. Have your ammo packaged per airline and TSA regulations, but easily accessible for them to inspect.

# Dealing With Customs

- Customs enforces importation and immigration laws in each country.
  - Laws will vary from country to country.
  - Best first source of information for more research is the outfitter, PH, booking agent, etc. with whom you'll be hunting in foreign country.
- Without proper information, planning and preparation, the most difficult Customs passage can be your reentry into the United States.
  - Acquiring and certifying a U.S. Customs Form 4457 for all of your valuable hunting gear (anything with a serial number) **BEFORE YOU LEAVE** the U.S. is the most important step in smoothly bringing it back into the Country when you return.
- Do not lie or even “fudge” with Customs. Delays are long, penalties are unpleasant.
  - If you were on a farm while you were outside the Country, tell them.
  - If you have fish, game or trophies with you, tell them.
  - Answer their questions and the questions on all Customs forms truthfully, but don't offer more than they ask for.
  - Have every piece of paperwork ready when they ask for it.

# Traveling with Trophies & Meat

- Prohibitively expensive with all the new baggage surcharges and fees
- Most airlines at 50 lbs. per bag for std. customers
- Airlines take virtually no responsibility for loss or spoilage
- No dry ice; ice okay, but too much weight
- Plan ahead
  - Coolers
  - Tape
  - Packing materials
- Break down non-record racks to fit in luggage
- Carry-on small game, birds, meat
- Consider alternatives, i.e. driving, shipping meat, processing, donations

# Traveling with Dogs

- I haven't flown commercial airlines with dogs since 9-11
- Travel stress – mine and the dog's
- Weather conditions permitting travel are unpredictable
- Carry-on puppies, small dogs
- Shipping dogs via air freight simpler, but not easy
- Consider tranquilizers carefully
- Crate training #1
- Hotels that are dog friendly  
<http://www.dogfriendly.com/server/travel/guides/us/us.shtml>
- Some dogs go “off feed” on the road
- The “Pink Collar” trick
- I.D. Chips the way to go  
<http://public.homeagain.com/>

# Tips from 30 Years on the Road

- Combination locks are better than keyed locks in most cases – safety valve.
- If a hunting destination abroad offers the use of firearms for rent, consider it carefully. It can be a time and money saver!
- Tape extra keys (gun case, trigger locks, baggage locks, home, car, etc.) on the inside of hard gun case behind foam.
- Put extra copies of crucial papers (passport, dogs' vaccination certificates, hunting licenses, visas, etc.) inside hard gun case.
- Make a quality LED headlamp part of your standard “go everywhere” gear.
- Take both plain Advil and a night-time/sleep formula in your travel kit.
- Take along meds for Traveler's diarrhea.
- Take a large pack of moldable-type ear plugs any time there is a chance you'll be sharing a tent, cabin, room, etc.
- Biodegradable baby wipes are a terrific TP substitute and wonderful luxury in wilderness camps.
- Keep a good flashlight and extra batteries in your toilet kit at all times.
- Unless you want to end up sleeping five nights on a garbage bag of dirty laundry take your own packable pillow on every trip.

# Tools for the Traveling Hunter/Shooter

## Gun Cases

[NALPAK Tuffpak http://www.nalpak.com/TuffpakSportCases](http://www.nalpak.com/TuffpakSportCases)  
<http://www.pelican-case.com/1742rica.html>

## Trigger Locks

<http://www.triggerlock.com/>

## TSA Conforming Locks

<http://www.padlocks4less.com/shop/travel/tsa-locks/blue-tsa-luggage-belt-lock.html>

## Ammo Box

<http://www.flambeauoutdoors.com/hunting/default.asp?p=Details&i=1408&fp=1>

## Coolers for Hunters

<http://www.igloo-store.com/detail/IGL+REALTREE+HLC48>  
[http://www.yeticoolers.com/?utm\\_source=bing&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_term=yeti%20coolers&utm\\_campaign=yeticoolers](http://www.yeticoolers.com/?utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_term=yeti%20coolers&utm_campaign=yeticoolers)

## Packable Travel Pillow

<http://cascadedesigns.com/therm-a-rest/sleep-systems/pillows/compressible-pillow/product>

## Moldable Ear Plugs

<http://www.macksearplugs.com/details/ear-plugs-for-snoring/pillow-soft-earplugs-6-pair-value>

## Dog Friendly Accommodations

<http://www.dogfriendly.com/server/travel/guides/us/us.shtml>