



Where journeys begin.

NEWS RELEASE

December 15, 2014

Ten Santa-approved ways to reduce holiday travel stress

The Comox Valley Airport (YQQ) has issued its annual top 10 holiday travel tips to help passengers plan ahead for the upcoming busy travel season. Addressing a range of issues from miniature reindeer to chatty elves, YQQ is hoping that passengers will use these light-hearted tips to help make their journeys over the holidays as enjoyable as possible:

1. **Warning: Playful elves are tinkering around with our terminal hours** - We have it on good authority that Santa's sleigh won't touch down at YQQ if the building is open, so we have to close down early on Christmas Eve (and on a few other nights too).
2. **Impress Santa by arriving early** - It is going to be busy in the terminal over the holidays and there will be lines at the airline counters and security. Check with your airline to determine what time you should arrive at the airport and give yourself some additional wiggle room to avoid pre-departure stress.
3. **Your three-year old isn't afraid of technology and you shouldn't be either** - Avoid turning into the Grinch Who Stole Christmas when you get stuck in the middle seat at the back of the plane (yes, it is close to the restroom but nobody wants to sit there). Checking in online saves you time and will allow you to reserve a happy holiday seat that comes with a cheerful candy cane bearing elf.
4. **Don't get hit with an unexpected expense at check-in** - Spent all your money on awesome Christmas gifts and don't have a penny to your name? You might be travelling without your suitcase and sharing a toothbrush with your brother if unexpected baggage charges apply to you.
5. **The airport is not the place to showcase your superior gift wrapping skills** - We know it hurts not to put that high-priced, bedazzled reindeer gift paper on display, but it really comes down to this: do you want the security screener, or Aunt Mildred to open your holiday masterpiece?
6. **They don't change the rules at security just because it is Christmas** - Everyone knows that you can't take a carton of egg nog, or anything sharp with you on the plane, so please don't hold up the security line for the sake of a reindeer-embossed cork screw.

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7. **There's no need to be embarrassed about your driver's license photo** - If Santa was travelling, he would have to show proper I.D. to get on the plane and Mrs. Clause would probably tease him about his photo too. We guarantee you the Customer Service Agent has seen worse, so have your I.D. ready and don't let your insecurity hold up the line.
8. **Carry-on restrictions apply to everyone, even Santa** - Flight attendants have heard it all and if the world's jolliest old elf tried to jam a sack of toys into the overhead bin, he would have to check his oversized item just like everyone else.
9. **Your miniature reindeer might not have guaranteed space in pet cargo** - Make sure you check with your airline ahead of time to ensure you understand any requirements for travelling with a pet (particularly anything with antlers or a Christmas sweater).
10. **Don't get on the naughty list because elves have a long memory** - Our hidden elves are reporting back to Santa daily. These guys are chatty and they live for hundreds of years, so put your best foot forward and don't give them anything to gossip about.

"Each year we work cooperatively with Elves Helping Airports (E.H.A), a subsidiary of North Pole Incorporated, to refine our operational procedures over the holidays," explained Comox Valley Airport CEO, Fred Bigelow. "The goal is to help alleviate unnecessary holiday stress for our passengers, while keeping the big guy in red and his little helpers happy. You could say that this is YQQ's contribution to ensuring the nice list is longer than the naughty list come Christmas Eve."

The Comox Valley Airport generally experiences a significant increase in terminal traffic beginning around December 19 and continuing until a few days after the New Year. The terminal's busiest day will likely be December 23 with up to 1,300 passengers travelling through YQQ. Including guests who are dropping off or picking up passengers, there could be up to 2,600 people moving through the terminal on any given day over the holidays.

YQQ will accommodate increased traffic by assigning additional staff and volunteers during peak hours. Information regarding terminal hours, parking and links to all of YQQ's airlines are available on the Comox Valley Airport website at: www.comoxairport.com. The Canadian Air Transport Security Authority website also has helpful tips at: www.catsa.gc.ca/holidays.

Media Contact:

Christianne Wile, Comox Valley Airport
250-890-0829 ext. 253
cwile@comoxairport.com



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BACKGROUNDER

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YQQ Holiday Season Travel Tips

1. **Terminal hours** - Terminal hours have been adjusted from December 24 to January 1 to accommodate holiday flight schedules:

December 24 – 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.

December 25 – 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

December 26 – 8 a.m. to 11 p.m.

December 31 – 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.

January 1 – 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

2. **Arrive early** - Check with your airline to determine what time you should arrive at the airport and give yourself some additional wiggle room. This will ensure you have plenty of time to locate a parking spot, check-in, and move through security without feeling rushed. Please note that WestJet's check-in counters now close 45 minutes prior to aircraft departure.
3. **Utilize technology where possible** - Check with your airline to determine if there are options for web, kiosk or mobile phone check-in to save time when you arrive at the airport. Information on hours, parking, arrivals, departures and links to all of our airlines is available on the YQQ website at www.comoxairport.com
4. **Baggage restrictions** - Check with your airline to ensure that you have the latest information about baggage restrictions. Be prepared if any extra charges may apply to you. If you have any items that you are unsure about, check with your airline prior to arriving at the airport so that you can avoid any unnecessary surprises or delays.
5. **Keep all gifts unwrapped** - It is best to keep all of your items (including those packed in your checked baggage) unwrapped until you arrive at your destination point.
6. **Don't hold up the security line** - Avoid bringing items that contain liquid, aerosols or gels in your carry-on bag. This includes alcohol, snow globes, maple syrup, perfume and lotions. Remember that these items must be 100 ml or less and must fit in a 1-litre clear, resealable bag. Still unsure about the rules? Visit the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority website at: www.catsa.gc.ca/holiday.

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7. **Proper I.D. is required to fly** - You are responsible for making sure that you have the proper identification and travel documentation for yourself and your children as required by the country of destination. Within Canada, adults 18 years of age or older are required to have one piece of government-issued photo ID or two pieces of government-issued non-photo ID (one of which must show the name, date of birth and gender of the traveller). Proof of age for your infant may also be required; check with your airline if you are unsure.
8. **Carry-on restrictions**- All of YQQ's airlines have clear policies about the size and number of carry-on items that are allowed on board the aircraft. Check with your airline ahead of time and adhere to the rules. Understand that cabins will be fuller than usual over the holidays.
9. **Airlines may have different rules for pets over the holidays** - Make sure you check with your airline before you get to the airport to ensure you understand any requirements for travelling with a pet over the holidays. If you are taking your pet(s) in or out of any province, territory or country, you are responsible for meeting the customs and/or regulatory entrance requirements of your destination.
10. **Santa will know if you have been naughty or nice** - Expect the airport will be busy and lineups may be longer than usual. Maintaining good cheer and having respect for YQQ's staff, volunteers, tenants and other passengers will help to ensure an enjoyable holiday travel experience for all. Remember, Santa will be watching!

Media Contact:

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cwile@comoxairport.com