

# HOT TRAVEL TIPS for LOW FLUTISTS

1. ***Make sure your instrument(s) are properly insured at replacement value, with a current instrument appraisal.***

Airlines have liability or damage recovery allowances and they typically will not pay for replacement cost of your musical instrument, if damaged or lost. Most homeowners insurance policies do not adequately cover musical instruments. If you play professionally, you probably cannot make a claim on your homeowner's policy for a musical instrument.

2. ***Make sure your instrument case is "travel ready" with as little bulk and weight as possible.***

Some cases are not designed well for travel. Your instrument should be adequately protected in a sturdy case. Hopefully, you will not need to check your instrument, but contras - be prepared, just in case. Mark your case as fragile, in several places. Have identification both inside and outside your case. *I keep an Apple air tag in my contra case.*

3. ***Know the carry-on baggage requirements and know the luggage compartment space.***

This is especially important when traveling by air. Know your airline's policy for musical instruments and print it out. With contras, your case size might be a little over the maximum size allowance, but typically you can bring it on board, space permitting. Best to purchase the early boarding option, as overhead space is first come, first serve. Sometimes airlines use regional jets that have very limited carry on luggage space. Try to book on larger regional jets that have more carry-on space or book on larger aircraft. Also, when traveling on airlines from other countries, they oftentimes require you to check large musical instruments or buy a full fare seat if you want to carry on your large flute. Print out and carry a copy of your airlines baggage policy.

4. ***Pack lightly! Travel lightly!***

This is especially important when traveling by air. The more stuff you take with you, the more likely you are to have issues with carrying everything, as well as when checking in for flights. If airline personnel see you carrying a bunch of stuff, you are much more likely to have to check your instrument. Remove all extraneous items from your instrument case. The TSA may find your musical accessories very interesting and might want to open your case for extra screening.

5. ***Never pack your flute in checked baggage, unless you are required to check it.***

When checking into flights, boarding trains or buses, keep your instrument with you, if at all possible. Try to stay "under the radar" not drawing attention to it. Carry a picture of your instrument to show, if needed.

6. ***Be very polite and calm if you are asked to check your instrument.***

Do not argue with flight crew or airline agents. This is very important! Usually, you can work through this and not have to check it. Work with them on this, calmly describing

how delicate your flute is. Ask if you can take it to the gate, rather than checking it at the ticket counter. When at the gate, if questioned, ask if you could please take it on board. I always describe that my contrabass flute case is like the size of a violin case, only round, on wheels.

**7. *Try to carry your flute in a bag that looks like inexpensive luggage.***

Be inconspicuous and know where your flute is at all times, especially during check in, going through security or at the gate area.

**8. *Choose your musical accessories carefully, especially your music stand***

Decide what you need to carry with you and what you might be able to arrange when you arrive. Music stands can be cumbersome to transport. Decide on what type of music stand best suits your needs, if you need to carry one with you. I carry a carbon fiber music stand that is compact and lightweight.

**9. *Have a back-up plan!***

Prepare yourself for the possibility that you might have to check your instrument. What will you do? If you are prepared and your instrument is packed properly in a sturdy case, you should not have any problems checking your instrument. Remember that before you purchased your flute, it probably had been shipped, to your home or music store, as cargo, and oftentimes on airplanes. Before leaving your destination airport, examine your instrument for any potential damage. Report damage or any violation of airline policy to customer service before leaving your destination airport.

## **TRAVEL TAKE-AWAY**

- Airlines, regardless of policy, can require you check your instrument, based on circumstances.
- Before booking, know your aircraft's overhead baggage compartment dimensions.
- Pack lightly and check everything but your instrument and small purse or personal item.
- Board early – pay for early boarding or even more space seats
- Be polite and calm when working through a situation. Being aggressive will never work.

ABBREVIATED PROCEDURES — TRAVEL TIPS

- A. Insure your instrument.
- B. Measure the size and weight, including the case.
- C. Study airline carry-on and checked baggage musical instrument policies before selecting an airline.
- D. While booking your reservation, tell the agent you will be traveling with a musical instrument. Ask to speak to customer service to address questions.
- E. Request/purchase priority boarding in advance, and keep copies of receipts.
- F. Carry a copy of the DOT rule as outlined in the Federal Register or the DOT website, as well as a copy of the airline's policies.
- G. Limit carry-on items to one musical instrument, plus a personal item.
- H. Remove all extraneous items from your instrument's case and clearly place identification inside and outside the case.
- I. Have an alternative, back-up transportation plan in mind.
- J. Do not argue with flight crews! Calmly ask to speak with a customer service supervisor.
- K. Examine your instrument for possible damage before you leave the destination airport.
- L. Report any violation of airline policy or damage to airline customer service before you leave the airport.
- M. If you believe the airline has violated its written policies, first file a complaint with the airline. Also file a direct complaint with the Department of Transportation.  
[www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/file-consumer-complain](http://www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/file-consumer-complain)

<https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/us-department-transportation-issues-final-rule-regarding-air-travel-musical>

“At DOT, we know how important instruments are to musicians and are committed to doing everything we can to ensure that they are not damaged while being transported on airlines,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. “This final rule implements the statute, and it will go a long way towards keeping instruments safe when they fly – from allowing them in the cabin if there's space for safe stowage, to letting passengers buy a seat for certain large instruments.”

The rule requires that each U.S. carrier subject to this regulation allow a passenger to carry into the cabin and stow a small musical instrument, such as a violin or a guitar, in a suitable baggage compartment, such as the overhead bin or a closet, or under the seats, in accordance with FAA safety regulations and the carrier's FAA-approved carry-on baggage program.

Carriers must allow passengers to stow their small musical instruments in an approved stowage area in the cabin if at the time the passenger boards the aircraft such stowage space is available. Under the rule, musical instruments as carry-on items are treated no differently from other carry-on items and the stowage space

should be made available for all carry-on items on a “first come, first served” basis. Carriers are not required to give musical instruments priority over other carry-on baggage, therefore passengers traveling with musical instruments may want to buy the pre-boarding option offered by many carriers to ensure that space will be available for them to safely stow their instruments in the cabin.

For some musical instruments that are too large to fit in the cabin stowage areas described in the carrier’s FAA-approved carry-on baggage program (e.g., an overhead bin or under a seat), it is sometimes possible to secure them to a seat as “seat baggage” or “cargo in passenger cabin.” Carriers are required to carry large musical instruments in the cabin if the passenger wishing to carry the instrument in the aircraft cabin has purchased an additional seat to accommodate the instrument and the instrument is contained in a case or cover to avoid injury to other passengers, the weight of the instrument does not exceed 165 pounds or applicable weight restrictions for the aircraft, and the instrument can be stowed in accordance with the requirements for carriage of carry-on baggage or cargo established by the FAA. Carriers are not required to provide for this process in their carry-on baggage programs; however the Department encourages carriers that do not currently allow such stowage to amend their programs to allow it, provided that all safety requirements are met.

Carriers are required to accept musical instruments in the cargo compartment as checked baggage if those instruments comply with the size and weight limitations provided in Section 403 and the FAA’s safety regulations.

The final rule applies to scheduled and charter flights in domestic or international transportation operated by U.S. carriers, regardless of the size of the aircraft they operate. The rule also applies to persons not directly involved in the operation of an aircraft who sell air transportation services to the general public other than as an authorized agent of a carrier.

This final rule is issued without notice and comment from the public as it simply implements the statutory requirements. The rule will take effect 60 days after its publication in the Federal Register. The final rule is available on the Internet at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), docket DOT-OST-2014-0231.