

Bonus: How I Lazy Genius Air Travel

Hi there! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't! This is a bonus episode which we do about once a month, and one kind of bonus episode we on Team LG love to share is how to lazy genius something super specific. Today is that day where I share how I Lazy Genius air travel.

Airports and airplanes have a lot about them that's the worst, but flying is also part of life for a lot of people so why not Lazy Genius it? I'm going to share my start to finish air travel process and how I apply Lazy Genius principles to it. Hopefully you get some ideas on how to make air travel easier, too.

First, packing. I do not have a Decide Once rule about checking backs or carrying on, mostly because it depends on how long I'm gone and what the tradeoff is for how many liquids I need. I find a lot of comfort in having all my potions and my dry shampoo and not skimping on the brands I love to settle for brands I don't but that happen to have travel sizes for stuff. So every time I have to get on a plane, I look at how long I'll be gone, what I'll have to do to my hair, how fancy my makeup has to be, and then decide if it's worth it to carry on. Because a lot of times, it's not. I'd rather just pack my full size products, take everything I need, and check a bag. Plus, I love how nimble travel is to not roll my carryon through the airport. It's not a dealbreaker or anything, but getting off the plane and walking around and going to the bathroom and all the things with just a backpack or purse? Yes, please. That's not a decision for everyone, but it is for me. I'd rather have the ease of packing everything I need than the ease of not waiting at baggage claim. I'd rather just wait at baggage claim.

Next, my carryon purse or bag. This also depends on how long I'll be gone and what I'm actually doing on the trip. I have a small leather backpack I really like for airports, but it's small and only carries the essentials. It's also not great for going out to dinner with friends because I don't want to wear a backpack with my fancy top. That's been a thing on a trip. So if my small backpack covers my trip needs, I'll just use that and nothing else. If I need something bigger or more versatile for the entire trip, I have a large shoulder bag. Occasionally, I'll back a tiny crossbody or wristbag if I need something nice while I'm gone but that definitely won't cut it as my airplane bag.

Because here's the thing. We have to name what matters most, right? Two of my top needs are having what I need and ease. Sometimes those go together in one choice, but if I have to choose only one of those priorities, it's having what I need. That's why I'd rather check a bag than carry on because I'd rather have what I need than have the ease of no baggage claim. The same is true for my extra purse carryon. I'd rather have what I need. The backpack is easier, and sometimes it also has what I need. But I'll sacrifice the ease of the backpack for the need of a bigger bag. Does that make sense? Knowing what matters most helps you make a better decision, even a decision like what kind of purse or bag to take on a plane.

Okay, what about what I put in my bag on a plane? My essentials are airpods, lotion because my hands get so dry when I'm traveling, a water bottle - I use the Owala water bottle that was in our holiday gift guide last year and I'm obsessed with it, hand sanitizer and extra masks obviously - which, by the way, we'll stop there. I have packs of black kn95 masks that I use exclusively for travel. I wear them other places sometimes, but I don't take reusable masks on trips. I always take kn95s. So hand sanitizer and masks. My kindle paperwhite because I read a lot, my little charger wallet which is a cute zippered thing that holds charging cables and airpod cases and whatever else you want to carry so they don't get all tangled up in your bag, granola bar, dried mango - seriously, those are the snacks I always take, and a notebook and pen. I learned this one after flying a lot over a stretch of weeks, especially on longer flights. Doing everything digitally was making my brain sad. Sometimes I just wanted to write something down or make a list or draw a doodle. I needed to do something with my hands. I thought about taking my cross-stitch stuff on my last flight but got nervous about the tiny scissors and needles even though the TSA website said it was allowed and I was terrified it would be confiscated at the gate! But then I sat next to a woman who had her cross-stitch kit and was so mad I didn't bring mine. So that might happen on my next flight. But the point is I need something analog. It's so important to have a place to go, even something that's not a hardcover book. That doesn't quite count either. I have to have the option to make something with my hands for a more peaceful air travel experience. So those are my travel bag essentials.

We'll be right back...

As far as my clothes, I have an airport uniform for the most part. Soft pants that aren't denim, so either leggings or a pair of Vuori joggers which are the best joggers in all the world. I wear those with a white or gray tshirt in case I get hot which happens, and either my Able duster cardigan or this boxy cropped sweater I got from Everlane a few years ago. Both of those are great layer pieces because they keep me warm, they're super comfortable, but they're easy to take off if I get hot or for when I go through security. So comfy pants, a white or gray tshirt, and one of two sweaters depending on my mood and what will work best for the whole trip. And socks with shoes that slip off easily. Last fall, I flew for the first time in years and forgot that you have to take off your shoes at security. I was wearing these beautiful flats from either Everlane or Madewell - I can't remember - that I love, but no socks obviously because they're flats. And I thought I was being so smart by having shoes that come off easily, but then when I was walking through security in my bare feet, I almost vomited. This was a terrible decision for me, so I learned my lesson there. Socks with shoes that come off easily. That's either a pair of loosely tied Allbirds or Vionic sneakers or a pair of Sorel boots that are my favorite winter shoes and come off super easily.

Okay, I've been talking about shoes for a long time, but I'm realizing it's important to say that I get kind of anxious in the security line. Not that I'm going to get in trouble, but the Enneagram One in me, her shadow side comes out kind of loud in security lines. I want to be efficient and not make anyone wait. I don't want to do something stupid and be laughed at. I want to just go in and out like a pro. Now, do those things really matter? Not really. If I goof or forget to take my belt off (which is why I don't wear a belt), it's not a big deal. But the emotional work required for

me to tell myself the truth when I do goof is so heavy that I do try and avoid those situations. I'm not wearing easily removable shoes or keeping my liquids bag in my purse because I want to get it right and be an amazing traveler. I do it because the work required to tell myself that I don't have to be an amazing travel is not work I want to do in an airport. I'd rather have an easy, efficient time in the security line so that there are fewer chances I'll have to give myself a pep talk that I am okay for not doing it right. Does that make sense? I prioritize having an easy security experience to keep myself from having to talk myself down from having a hard security experience. That might not make sense to some of you, but maybe for others you're like YES I GET THAT. So that's the section on what I wear.

Now let's talk about how I spend my time in the actual airport. First, I very much ask the Magic Question when it comes to food before I even leave my house. I look at my flight time, my layover, what timezone I'll be in, and ask myself "what can I do now to make eating food easier later?" I think about when I'll have a chance to eat a real meal and not just a granola bar and adjust my airport eating to accommodate that. It's a high priority for me and my body and my experience to eat real food. And I don't mean real like stuff only from the earth. I just mean some protein, something that's hearty and tastes good but that's not just a candy bar or burgers and fries. My go-to meal in an airport is some kind of rice bowl. Maybe a chicken teriyaki thing or if there's some kind of Chipotle-esque place, that. But rice with some kind of protein and maybe a vegetable is my best airport meal. That's my Decide Once, and every bigger airport has something like that. So back to the Magic Question. If I know I'll need to eat an actual meal in the airport because of how long I'll be traveling, I Magic Question that process. I might not eat breakfast if I know I'll be eating airport lunch closer to 11am and not get access to food again until 8pm. I want to be hungry for that lunch to carry me through to the late evening, so I'll skip breakfast so I'll be hungry. If I know I'll need to grab my food on my way to my next gate but I'll have to walk through four terminals to get to it, if I see a rice bowl restaurant with a short line, I'll go ahead and get in that line to get my food and just carry it the rest of the way to my terminal. I don't necessarily get to my terminal and *then* find a place to eat. I keep an eye out because I've already decided once what I'm eating, and I'd rather not wait for it longer than I have to, no matter what terminal it's in.

And here's my favorite airport choice that is not at all revolutionary but is revolutionary for me. If I have the time, say if my next flight doesn't board for 15 minutes or longer, I will go and sit at an empty gate. My biggest stressor at an airport by a mile are the people inside it. I think that everyone's worst comes out at the airport. I just get easily irked by behaviors, by improper mask wearing, by how people treat their children or spouses or the folks working at the airport who are just doing their jobs... the people are the worst part of the airport for me, so the more I can be away from them, the better I am emotionally. So I seek out empty gates. I pick a chair facing the window because seeing the sky is so good for me, I set an alarm on my phone for 15 minutes before my flight is supposed to board, and I just hang out there until it's time to go. And it's the best airport decision I make. Every single time. Empty gates, y'all. Find the empty gates.

A couple of other quick things I always do with air travel. First, and this isn't that big of a deal and might sound kind of weird, but when the plane lands, I just keep doing what I'm doing. Now,

I don't share that to be like "don't stand up, everyone, you can't leave yet!" even though I do feel that way. But it's precisely that feeling that has led me to the choice to keep reading or listening to my music or whatever I'm doing and not pay attention to everyone who's standing and scrunched down in the aisles waiting to get off the plane. Because I get frustrated by that practice, I expect it. I tell myself, okay everyone is going to immediately stand up and sigh deeply while they wait and get kind of frustrated because we all want to get off the plane, but Kendra you just expect that they'll do that and don't let it bother you and just keep reading until the four rows in front of you actually start moving. That's kind of a strange Decide Once, but it really keeps from me getting frustrated at people on the plane.

And finally, rental cars. If you're at an airport and you're picking up a rental car which I've done a lot of times, I want to share a tip and a story. First, the tip. When you get to your rental car, get situated. Find the blinkers and windshield wipers. Check all the mirrors and make sure the side mirrors aren't flipped inward while you're in the parking lot instead of on the highway. Plug in your phone and set up the bluetooth. Check the map of where you're going. Get your water bottle and drink. Take some deep breaths. Stretch a little. Sometimes I sit in my rental car for 15 minutes before I start driving just to make sure I'm comfortable. Being in a new car is slightly stressful for me, especially after coming off of the actual flight and airport time, so it's good for me to take as much time as I need before I leave. Again, I've been there for 15 minutes before I even put the car in reverse.

Now a story that has to do with a rental car but has broader strokes for air travel in general. Last fall, I was on the longest trip ever. I flew to Minnesota for a work thing which took a long time because North Carolina to Minnesota is not super direct. My time in Minnesota was quite short before I flew to Florida for another thing. That trip I was gone for I think five days and counted that I was on something like nine or ten planes during those five days? Plus several hours in rental cars? It was a lot. Anyway, when I arrived in Florida and got my rental car to drive to Alabama because that was I doing, I was exhausted. It was 10 at night, my flights were pretty stressful because I had barely enough time to get to each gate. Like, ran up to my gate sweating as my flight was boarding. It was stressful. So by the time I got to my rental car in Florida, I was hungry and tired and still had over an hour drive ahead of me and just wanted to get where I was going. Well, I got to my rental car space in the big rental car parking lot, I loaded up my stuff in the car, checked the mirrors, did all the things, and then went to plug my phone into the car and realized I couldn't. I couldn't find a USB port or whatever for my phone. It was the wrong kind of cable. Now I didn't know where I was going, so I needed my Google Maps, but I also was never at a gate long enough to charge my phone and my planes didn't have ports for charging, so my phone had something like 12% battery life. For an hour plus drive where I needed the map. IN the middle of literally nowhere. And I started to cry. I was like "this car isn't right, it's not going to work, but I just want to leave and I'm so tired" and it was a whole thing.

But then I took a deep breath and thought "okay. I need a different car. It's going to be annoying to get my stuff out and walk back to the airport and try and get a new car and it's a hassle, but this is important. Kendra, we need to do this. This is not the time to take a drive on a prayer and

hope the 12% battery lasts until you get to Alabama in the dead of night.” So I packed up my stuff, rolled it all back to the airport, went to the rental car desk where a new person was working because I was in the car long enough for a shift change, and said “Hi, I just got to my rental car, but I can’t plug in my phone and really need to.” The woman was super kind, super helpful, gave me an upgrade for my trouble, and I was back in a new car in literally seven minutes.

When I plugged in my phone and got situated in my new car, I was a different person. When we are stressed out, we often can’t see the forest for the trees. We think that any time step to make things easier is going to be a waste and so much effort and the worst and we get even more stressed. We spiral. I was close to spiraling in that rental car. I even called Kaz who didn’t answer because it was after 11pm and he was asleep. I was crying and tired and it was awful and I just didn’t want to be a grownup right then. But I knew that the potential inconvenience of getting a new car, both for me and maybe even for the person who worked there (even though that’s their job and it wasn’t an inconvenience at all), was absolutely worth my having what I needed.

Again, what matters most? I need to have what I need. I need to be secure in having what I need. And that is always more important than ease or convenience. Always always. That story in the moment was a real flag in the sand on what mattered to me. It showed me what was worth my effort, and it’s impacted all my trips after.

So that is how I Lazy Genius my air travel, and while some of those tips I hope are helpful, more than that, I hope you see how naming what matters most to you will impact your decisions, even decisions that feel like they’re already made for you, like in an airport.

Thanks for listening to this bonus episode, I hope it helps the next time you’re in an airport, and until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don’t. I’m Kendra, and I’ll see you next week!