

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES/FILE

Passengers at O'Hare International Airport waited to be screened at a Transportation Security Administration checkpoint in Chicago.

SECURITY SCREENING BACKLOG

By Hannah Sampson

THE WASHINGTON POST

Some travelers looking to speed up their international security screening are running into roadblocks. And according to US Customs and Border Protection, a surge in immigration and the government shutdown at the beginning of the year are responsible.

"The extended partial government shutdown and the ongoing humanitarian and security crisis on our southern border has resulted in a substantial backlog of CBP's Trusted Traveler Programs applications and renewals," the agency says on its website.

In an e-mail, a spokesperson said that because more Customs and Border Protection workers have been sent to the southern border, the agency has reduced staffing levels at Global Entry enrollment centers, forcing "many" scheduled interviews to be canceled.

At Los Angeles International Airport, the enrollment center has been closed indefinitely, the agency confirmed to the Los Angeles Times.

Anyone applying for expedited border programs including Global Entry, the most popular, "should expect significant delays in application processing times and limited appointment availability" at enrollment centers, the website said.

According to the site, it could take up to 100 days for Global Entry applications to be processed, though the CBP spokesperson said in an e-mail that between 65 and 70 percent of applications and renewals are being processed in 15 or fewer days. About 25 percent of applications have a processing time of more than 90 days. The agency said anyone who needs to reschedule an appointment should expect availability to be limited through Sept. 30.

Jim Butler, an attorney who lives in Beverly Hills, Calif., was supposed to have an appointment in Los Angeles in May to renew his membership, but got a notice that it had been canceled and no new appointment would be available

for several months because of the situation at the border.

"They say if you have any questions, call this number," Butler says. "You leave a message and they say, 'We may get back to you in two weeks.' They never did."

When he tried to reschedule, he learned about the closing of the enrollment center in Los Angeles. Eventually, he was able to make an appointment for August in Long Beach, Calif.

Global Entry lets travelers skip long immigration lines when returning to the country, but joining the program requires an application, background check, fingerprint scan, and in-person interview. The program costs \$100 for five years and includes TSA PreCheck, which lets travelers go through quicker security screening in US airports.

Other "trusted traveler" programs include Sentri, for quicker access to the United States by air and land from Mexico; Nexus, for access from Canada by air, land, and sea; and Fast, for truck drivers entering and leaving the States from Canada and Mexico. Global Entry has the most members, with 6.5 million.

Because TSA PreCheck is a benefit of Global Entry, travelers who care about that benefit the most — and have no immediate plans to travel outside the country — might want to apply directly for that program, CBP said. It costs \$85 for five years.

"PreCheck is not having any of the same issues that CBP is," says Jenny Burke, a Transportation Security Administration spokeswoman. She said the amount of time it typically takes for the entire process — applying, completing the process at an enrollment office, and getting a Known Traveler Number — is five to seven days.

Enrollment centers are available at airports as well as other locations, including some Staples stores. That's because TSA has a contract with an outside company to facilitate enrollment.

So for someone who only travels domestically — or wants to make sure they can use the fast lanes at US airports as they wait for Global Entry, "PreCheck is a really good option," Burke says. "It does take less time in general for it to come through."

The downside, she says, is that you can't use your Pre-Check enrollment to later get Global Entry. And paying for both is largely a waste of money.

Customs and Border Protection also said that travelers who have started the application process already and been conditionally approved — meaning they just need the in-person interview to wrap up — can get that interview taken care of when they arrive to the United States on an international flight. They must be at one of the 50 airports with an "enrollment on arrival" program.

"You'll still have to wait in line, which you were going to have to do anyway," Shannon McMahon, an editor at online travel magazine SmarterTravel.com, said in an e-mail. But that option "saves you a trip back to the airport to complete your interview."

Some enrollment centers at airports also accept walk-ins, but she suggested calling in advance to make sure and for the best strategy on when to show up.

McMahon said travelers looking to get back into the country faster have another option if Global Entry isn't in the cards.

"One great alternative to any paid expedited screening is the free Mobile Passport app, which works at 26 major airports," she says. "All users have to do is pull up the app when they arrive at the participating airport, input the usual answers to a few customs questions, snap a selfie, and submit the form."

Travelers can then waltz past lines to the signs for Mobile Passport — which, McMahon says, is usually paired up with the line for Global Entry.

Why it could take up to 100 days to process Global Entry applications.

HERE

SHAKESPEARE UNDER THE STARS

Theater lovers won't want to miss the Brown Box Theater Project's newest summer offering, Shakespeare's Measure for Measure, taking place at nine venues in Massachusetts (Aug. 9-25). The best part? Performances are free and no tickets are needed. Simply bring your lawn chairs or blankets to any of the outdoor venues and enjoy the words of The Bard beneath the stars. With a mission to bring live theater to communities that may lack access to the performing arts, Brown Box is offering shows in Boston, Fall River, Plymouth, Newton, Lowell, Easton, Webster, Allston, and Hopkinton. (Due to mature themes this show is recommended for ages 13 and older with the advisory of a parent.) brownboxtheatre.org

BOSTON ATTRACTION PASS OFFERS SAVINGS

Why should tourists have all the fun in Boston? Go Tourist offers both travelers and locals great deals for exploring the best the city has to offer. Enhance your summer staycation experience with unlimited entry to over 40 attractions including in categories such as museums and cultural attractions, zoos and aquariums, tours and cruises as well as family-friendly and open-late options. Simply pick the pass that's right for you — including number of consecutive days of use — download to your smartphone or print at home, and show your pass to be scanned for entrance. This flexible sightseeing pass allows you to explore Boston at your own pace while saving



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up to 65 percent with the All-Inclusive, versus gate price option. The pass is not activated until you visit your first destination. One, two, three, five, and seven-day rates available. Adults \$63-\$224; ages 3-12 \$42-\$164. gocity.com/boston/en-us/products/all-inclusive

THERE

ALL-WOMEN TOURS IN PORTUGAL

Catering to the growing population of female travelers, Wild Terrains has launched Portugal as its second destination for all-women tours. An eight-day/seven-night journey takes travelers to Lisbon, Alentejo, and Porto, on tours that support female-owned and operated businesses, including restaurants, wineries, bike expeditions, and an architected art and design tour. The small group trips in 2019 are almost fully booked — check online for availability — but the company has announced four new departures in 2020, Spring Break

(March 21-28), Mother/Daughter Mother's Day (May 3-10), Memorial Day Weekend (May 23-30), and Harvest Season (Oct. 3-10). Rates from \$2,950 per person (double occupancy), \$3,650 private room. Not included: airfare to and from Lisbon Portela International Airport, transportation to and from airport, visa fees, and travel insurance. 240-719-8528, www.wildterrains.com/portugal

STYLISH LODGE DEBUTS AT OREGON RESORT

Bringing a modern aesthetic to lodge design in the Pacific Northwest,

Pronghorn Resort announces the debut of Huntington Lodge, boasting 104 rooms and suites with fireplaces, kitchens, and private terraces with panoramic views of the golf course, forest, and mountains. The resort is in Bend, a central Oregon mecca for outdoor lovers (for rock climbing, hiking, fly fishing, whitewater rafting, paddle boarding, road cycling, mountain biking, skiing, and snowboarding) as well as those who love its vibrant downtown's boutiques, restaurants, and 18 breweries along the Bend Ale Trail. Pronghorn amenities include a wellness teepee, offering spiritual experiences such as yoga classes, clinical herbal tastings, crystal guidance workshops, and more; four restaurants with distinct culinary fare; full-service spa; fitness center; two world-class golf courses; and the Pronghorn Academy, a facility for family recreation and outdoor pursuits. Rates from \$350. pronghornresort.com/

Tracking App on your smartphone, and pair it with the device. The small, lightweight tracker (2½ by 2½ inches) attaches to your backpack, tent, or anywhere you stash your gear. Once activated, you can find your way to locations from 100-plus yards away. To share a location with a friend, enter their e-mail using the app, and send them access to your location marker. Once your trip is over, you can "unshare" the device to prevent additional tracking. Includes five bright blue LEDs and loud sound beacon as safety location tools for hiking, jogging on trails, skiing, camping, fishing, mountain biking, and more. \$39.99. shop.breadcrumbtech.com/products/location-marker

HIGH-FIDELITY WIRELESS FLIGHT ADAPTER

Tired of watching in-flight movies with flimsy plug-in headphones? RHA has debuted the Wireless Flight Adapter, allowing listeners to connect via Bluetooth to either a single stereo or twin mono audio channels with a simple one-button interface. The high-fidelity streaming signal connects to any wireless headphones. A 16-hour battery life means your movies on long flights — say, flying from Boston to Beijing — will not be interrupted. If you want to listen for even longer, the adapter can provide continuous playback if plugged in via the supplied USB-C cable. Can also be used with portable gaming devices and fitness equipment. Includes international three-year warranty. \$49.95. www.rhaudio.com/us/products/accessories/wireless-flight-adapter

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FIND YOUR WAY WITH TRACKING DEVICE

Modern-day Hansels and Gretels — and all trekking enthusiasts — will love the Breadcrumb Bluetooth Location Marker, a new tracking device specifically designed to keep you from getting lost in the great outdoors. Simply download the Breadcrumb

