

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1661 Things You Notice at Airports

I just got back from a trip to the mainland. I went from Guam to Seoul, then on the San Francisco. I left a very small airport and went to and from two very big ones. I want to chat a little about observations along the way. I'm Jerry Roberts and that's next on the Extra Point.

Leaving Guam, I was traveling with a family member who required wheelchair assistance. The attendant was friendly and right where she needed to be, as were those in Seoul and San Francisco. We flew T'Way from Guam, picked up United in South Korea, and the attention given was outstanding all the way.

One note on T'Way, we paid an additional fee for our seats and got them directly from their website. Unfortunately, the connection of those seats to our reservation didn't happen, and we didn't know that until we got to the airport.

It wasn't a problem because the gate agent had earlier noticed my companion's disability status, and had set aside special seats at the front. A great catch on his part.

Before heading for the gate, we bought a couple small bottles of water. They were four dollars each in the food court.

The whole issue of denying travelers the ability to bring water through TSA checkpoints is a touchy subject for many people. The small bottles of water that cost four bucks in the food court, cost a dollar outside the airport.

Airline security says they don't have the ability to adequately scan liquids to pick up fluids that could be used as explosives. If you have a 10 year-old who loves science, I've got a project for you. Figure out a scanner that can separate dangerous liquids from water, and the kid is a billionaire.

We're not done. In the San Francisco airport, SFO, they are doing away with plastic bottles

of water, and using metal instead. How much? \$6.00. At the Newark airport, serving New York City, almost \$8.00.

Then, there is the Incheon airport in South Korea. A bottle of Evian, same size, a dollar-fifty. New York, eight; San Francisco, six; Guam, four; Seoul, a buck-and-a-half.

Let me add that in San Francisco, I saw a sign at TSA that said there was a water fountain for refilling bottles after you passed through. This is a good move and addresses the complaints from travelers.

I'm not sure if it's filtered water, tap water, San Francisco Bay water or whatever. Still, it's a step in the direction.

Let's get to food. Guam has relatively few options and the prices are considerably higher than similar items on the street. However, Guam airport food prices are LOW in comparison to SFO.

Burgers for \$25.00, most plate meals are at \$20.00 or more. Simple snacks are outrageous and going up all the time. I don't think Biden can take the whole rap on this. The State of California's taxes and fees, and vendor greed account for it.

Do you know where food was excellent, and reasonably priced? At Incheon in Seoul. What I saw was about half the SFO cost.

You know what else? The service was better and the restrooms were cleaner. It's my third trip through Incheon, one of the fastest-growing airports in the world — now ranked #20 and heading for the top 10 — and now I look to route all flights there. The connections are good and the airport is easy to navigate.

Yes, it's big and you can get some exercise moving around, but it's traveler-friendly.

(Con't.)

So, why bring any of this up? Image, and how people feel about you when they're leaving. Your airport is the last chance to impress a visitor.

If airline staff, immigration and security workers, vendors all look angry, bored, or just aren't friendly...If the restrooms are dirty...if you gouge people on food and drinks...that's the final memory a traveler will have.

The next time they sit down to plan a trip, will they think of all that, and avoid you?

If they have to come your way, will they bring food with them and bypass your vendors?

Let's learn from the airports that are doing it right, and ignore the others. Let that last memory of Guam be a good one.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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