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PRACTICAL TRAVELER

Airlines Cut Back, Hotels Step In

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YOU don't have to fly first-class to get V.I.P. treatment at the airport — if you stay at the right hotel. As more and more guests show up harried after airline delays, baggage issues and other travel hassles, hotels are stepping in with new services designed to make the airport experience less stressful. From wardrobe storage to airport concierges, here's a rundown of some of the options being offered.

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André Letna

Your Own Concierge

A few years ago, the [Peninsula Beverly Hills](#) hired Jimmy Bardolf as the hotel's director of transportation and resident "airport concierge." Mr. Bardolf, along with his staff of five, meets guests at Los Angeles International Airport, gets them access to airline lounges and helps solve all manner of problems, including securing better seats on planes if available. At the airport Mr. Bardolf can be seen carrying around a 30-pound briefcase filled with everything from baby wipes to Krazy Glue for broken nails.

"Instead of guests having a poor experience here and making up for it when they get to the hotel," Mr. Bardolf said from one of several cellphones he carries while at the

airport to connect with hotel staff members and guests, "we try to be a concierge at the airport and make their lives a bit easier whether they're coming off an hour flight or a 14-hour flight."

While there is no charge for arriving guests, departing guests pay \$100 per family for speeding up the security process and getting access to airport lounges. That's at least \$100 less than American Airlines charges per couple for a similar V.I.P. option called Five Star Service.

Other hotels are teaming up with airports to offer similar services. Several Jamaican resorts, including [Round Hill Hotel & Villas](#) and [Island Outpost Hotel & Villas](#), have a relationship with Club Mobay, a V.I.P. service at Montego Bay airport that speeds departing guests through security and immigration and into a 10,000-square-foot lounge with Wi-Fi, showers, bar, mini-spa and a kids' corner, for \$30 a person — about \$5 less than you pay at the airport as of Dec. 15.

And guests of the new [Four Seasons Marrakech](#) who use the hotel's pickup service for 600 dirhams (\$74) are whisked to a V.I.P. lounge to have their passports checked instead of waiting in line at customs.

Luggage Solutions

Overburdened with luggage? Leave your bags at home. Last year, [Westin Hotels & Resorts](#) began lending guests New Balance sneakers and workout apparel to help reduce bulk in carry-on bags. Shoes come with new socks; sports shirts, pants and bras are washed between workouts, and shoe soles replaced.

[Fairmont Hotels & Resorts](#) offers a free similar program with Adidas gear for elite members of its loyalty program or \$10 per stay for other members. Other hotels like the [Four Seasons Chicago](#) and the [Ritz-Carlton Chicago](#) (also a Four Seasons hotel) eliminate the need for luggage completely by storing clothes for repeat clientele, at no charge beyond laundering. Guests arrive to a closet full of clothes that have been laundered and pressed.

For a \$315 fee, the [Trump SoHo](#) in New York goes a step further, curating guests' garments with the help of the luxury valet company Garde Robe, which stores and catalogs clothes by size, color and season, and will pull together outfits for specific occasions.

Hotels are also helping travelers dodge overweight luggage fees. Last year, the [Hampton Inn & Suites Wesley Chapel](#), just north of Tampa, Fla., installed a luggage weight scale in the lobby after overhearing one too many guests vent about getting hit with overweight or excess luggage charges.

"We ordered a luggage scale right then," said Janet Arnold, general manager of the hotel, which also keeps a variety of postal boxes for guests to ship items home if it will help them keep costs down. "It gets used about five times a week on average."

From the [Four Seasons Seattle](#) to [the Jefferson](#) in Washington, D.C., many hotels now offer meals to go. Roughly 60 percent of departing guests at [One & Only Palmilla](#) in Los Cabos, Mexico, order from the Air to Go menu, which includes sandwiches like slow-roasted pork on pita bread or grilled chicken breast with fruit and a cookie, for 280 pesos (about \$20). The [Four Seasons Seattle](#) introduced a Flight Bites menu last year, with meals like pasta salad with grilled eggplant and tomatoes, cured meats, pickles and cookies served in compostable containers, for \$30.


The [Montage Deer Valley](#) in Park City, Utah, has \$18 boxes packed with local fare like sandwiches made from Creminelli salami and Gold Creek aged Cheddar, homemade granola bars and honey pops made by the resort's resident beekeeper. And Hilton's [Hampton Inn](#) chain offers free On the Run Breakfast Bags packed with water, fruit, a muffin and a cereal bar each morning.

A Place to Relax

A growing number of international hotels are adding their own airport lounges for guests who want to freshen up after a long flight or relax before takeoff. Last year, the [Four Seasons Resort Hualalai](#) opened an airport lounge at Kona International Airport with a wet bar, Wi-Fi, charging stations for electronics and refreshments. In February, three of Hilton's Maldives Resorts — the [Hilton Maldives Iru Fushi Resort & Spa](#), [Waldorf Astoria Maldives](#) and [Conrad Maldives Rangali Island](#) — opened lounges (one for Hilton guests and one for Conrad and Waldorf guests) at the seaplane terminal of Male International Airport offering showers, Wi-Fi, a children's play room, shoulder massages and a resident chef who serves up smoked salmon pizza, Thai fish cakes and other dishes. The lounges, which stay open until 11 p.m., are free to guests upon arrival. Departing guests pay \$80 per adult and \$40 per child.

Hotels at airports are also stepping up. For example, [Sheraton Hotels & Resorts](#) offers half-day rates at its airport properties for travelers with long layovers or delays who want to spend the time in the privacy of a hotel room.

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