

Media Release
4 November 2011

TOP FIVE TIPS FOR DEALING WITH TRAVEL DISRUPTIONS

If you're heading off for a holiday or business trip, chances are your flight will take off as planned.

But there's no need to wing it if an issue arises – Flight Centre, New Zealand's largest travel agency, has compiled a collection of tips to guide travellers through the turbulence in the rare instances when flight schedules are disrupted.

"The good news is that major disruptions are relatively rare and most people will have no problems," Flight Centre New Zealand's executive general manager, Mike Friend says.

"If a problem does arise, travellers will find that help is at hand and that they do have options in terms of changing plans or simply getting home.

"During the recent Qantas flight groundings, Flight Centre's corporate travel teams, FCm Travel Solutions and Corporate Traveller, spent an entire day ensuring that they called all clients flying with Qantas.

"While the first priority was helping Flight Centre customers, the company was also able to help other travellers who had either booked directly or with online travel agencies and needed urgent assistance."

As the dust settles on last weekend's flight groundings, Flight Centre has outlined five tips for dealing with travel disruptions.

1. Don't rush in

The travel industry is accustomed to dealing with unexpected events and has generally been able to restore normal services quickly.

So, if an event arises and you're not travelling in the next few days, don't automatically rush in to change your plans.

Depending on the reason for the disruption, you may find that you can travel as initially planned.

By waiting, you will also avoid the frustration of the inevitable lengthy on-hold queues that occur immediately after an event and, potentially, additional charges that may apply if you choose to amend a booking that is still months away.

2. Ask a travel agent – even if you booked online or direct with the airline

If you need to alter your plans or understand your options urgently, you don't necessarily need to spend hours on hold waiting for someone to answer your call.

If you booked with a travel agent, phone the agent or shop directly, rather than a central call centre.

Even if you didn't book with an agent, help may be at hand.

During the Qantas flight groundings, Flight Centre's shops throughout New Zealand were able to help travellers who had booked directly with the airline or with online travel agencies.

To help customers and other travellers at this busy time, the company worked throughout the weekend to ensure their customer's got to where they needed to be.

3. Look for alternatives

If your flight plans are disrupted and you need to be home or at a meeting urgently, you're not necessarily grounded.

The solution may be as simple as switching to an alternative airline.

If there is a problem with a particular flight path, as was the case during the ash cloud disruptions in June, talk to your agent because you may be able to travel from A to B, via C.

You may also be able to travel by alternative means, including charter flights, trains, buses, ferries or hire cars.

4. Check your travel insurance policy

While travellers typically take the time to read the fine print in their insurance policies when it comes to medical assistance, not as many are aware of their rights if flights are cancelled or delayed for extended periods.

Don't assume that the airline will automatically accommodate you if it cancels or delays a flight.

While this is generally the case, it pays to have a comprehensive travel insurance policy as a backup.

Talk to a travel agent who can explain the details to you.

5. Understand the difference between cancelling and amending your booking

Historically, when an issue has arisen to temporarily disrupt travel plans, airlines have generally been willing to waive the booking amendment fees that would normally apply.

This has allowed travellers to either postpone their holidays and travel later or to switch to alternative destinations without incurring significant costs.

Charges can, however, increase substantially if you choose to cancel your plans altogether, which is generally the least common option for travellers.

If you're thinking of cancelling or amending, it pays to weigh up the potential costs.

- ENDS -

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About Flight Centre

Flight Centre (NZ) Ltd is New Zealand's largest travel agency, with approximately 900 staff in more than 200 retail stores and businesses nationwide.

Flight Centre consultants are travel experts and are selected for their vast product knowledge and their passion for travel. Flight Centre's global network allows consultants access to the widest travel product offering in the New Zealand, at the best value.

Brands in the New Zealand market operated by Flight Centre (NZ) Ltd include;

Flight Centre
Premium Travel
FCm Travel Solutions
Corporate Traveller
Infinity Holidays
Escape Holidays
cievents
Cruiseabout
Student Flights

The company has won the JRA Best Workplaces, large workplace category award for eight consecutive years. In addition and in recognition of Flight Centre's continued achievements in the JRA Best Workplaces Survey over the past eight years, Flight Centre is also a Five-Year League Award recipient.

Flight Centre Limited globally has almost 13,000 staff in 11 countries including Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Hong Kong, India and China