Summer 2023
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ASSIST AMERICA
Assist America was formed to address the specific needs of the everyday traveler. Our members enjoy peace of mind, freedom from dealing with complex decisions and financial considerations during difficult times, and security in knowing that initiating Assist America services will put our network of resources into action to respond to travel emergencies. If appropriate medical care is not available locally, then we will transport the member to the nearest facility that is capable of treating them.

Assist America operates emergency operations centers 24/7 from locations that are strategically located to provide services on a global scale.

Scan the QR code to watch a short video on our services.
Safety incidents and accidents in the aviation industry are justifiably and prudentially put under the microscope when they occur, particularly within the commercial aviation sector. Not only do they cause, or have the potential to cause, loss of life and substantial damage, but they can also have an impact on passenger confidence and demand if airline safety is questioned. Due to the visibility of the industry, the data is heavily tracked and reported, and recently the International Air Transport Association (IATA) published its annual IATA Safety Report (ISR), which is a culmination of global commercial aviation industry data along with safety performances and practices. This annual report provides safety insights for the industry, as well as a top-level view of accidents and incidents versus the total number of daily flights. Recent events as well as accidents and incidents from 2022, have given rise to questions on aviation safety, and it is important to assess the safety precautions and programs for airlines, and how carriers and the industry responds.

The Numbers

Overall, the commercial aviation industry reported 39 accidents last year, which was an increase from the 29 accidents reported in 2021. Although any accident above zero is too many for the industry, 39 accidents last year indicate there was one accident per 826,000 flights. Out of these, five resulted in fatalities, a decrease in fatal accidents from 2021 and a decrease from the five-year fatality rate, though it was an increase in the number of total fatalities from 2021. It is important to highlight the sharp increase in air travel from 2021 to 2022 as the industry recovers from the events of 2020. Last year more than 32 million flights were flown, which was a 25-percent increase compared with 2021. Nevertheless, when accidents occur in this sector, it typically encompasses, or has the potential to encompass, fatalities, serious injuries, or substantial damage to property, and any event should be used as a lesson to prevent others from happening.

Looking at the data by region, aircraft type, and contributing factors, turboprop accidents declined in 2022, however four of the fatal accidents occurred with a turboprop aircraft. Two regions, Latin America and Africa, saw an increase in turboprop accidents from their five-year average, with Africa being one of the three regions to have suffered a fatal accident last year. Adverse weather, which included winds and thunderstorms, particularly with wind shear and gusts, was cited as a contributing factor in 31 percent of accidents. The second-most cited factor in accidents from 2022 was aircraft malfunction. The industry is constantly working toward the improvement of safety standards and policies, and one way the industry works toward benchmarking standards is through safety programs.
Safety Programs

Significant safety indicators are IATA membership and IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) accreditation. The program consistently proves its success through data, as the accident rate for these carriers was less than half that for non-IATA IOSA carriers. The program audits individual carriers, unlike international audits where country performance is evaluated, such as the US Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) program. The US FAA evaluates an individual country’s civil aviation authority’s (CAA) oversight and adherence to the UN’s International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards on elements such as the country’s aviation legislation, personnel qualifications, and training in technical aspects.

Most Common Incidents

With the recent number of runway incidents in commercial aviation, the causes and possible prevention methods are crucial information. Runway safety is rated one of the most serious threats to aviation, and though runway excursions have a lower fatality rate, they are the most common type of accident reported annually. A runway excursion is an overrun or a veer off from the runway while an aircraft is taking off or landing. Within the last 10 years, runway excursions accounted for more than 20 percent of commercial aviation accidents, with 86 percent occurring while the aircraft was landing. Further data reveals the two leading causes of runway excursions are long or bounced landing, or the continuation of landing after an unstable approach.
Bottomline

Air travel is incredibly safe. There were more than 32 million flights in 2022 with only five of those resulting in fatalities. The industry’s global success is dependent on minimizing incidents, and it is likely we will continue to see a push toward increased safety standards, as well as an emphasis on increased training, staffing levels, and the utilization of technology to further prevent future incidents or accidents.
Pauline*, a member from Massachusetts, was in Italy with her husband Greg* to indulge their palettes with the nation’s authentic cuisine and magnificent views. After their meal at a local artisan restaurant, Pauline began coughing and experiencing chest tightness. Greg believed she was having an allergic reaction to something she consumed. Pauline’s condition was not improving and, unsure of what to do, Greg contacted Assist America to find a physician that could help diagnose her. Our Operations Case Manager immediately provided referrals to physicians within the proximity of their location so Pauline could receive an evaluation. Our team maintained regular correspondence with Pauline and Greg throughout the medical emergency and she was able to visit a local doctor. The physician was able to treat her asthmatic episode, prescribed the appropriate medications. Assist America followed up with Pauline soon after her brief visit.
“We were able to enjoy the rest of our trip without incident thanks to Assist America. Truly cannot say enough about how excellent the service was when we needed it most”, Greg said of the experience.
HAPPY TRAVELS

AN EXPERT'S GUIDE ON CRUISE SAFETY
As more people are once more weighing the possibility of taking a cruise following the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year passenger numbers are anticipated to return to their pre-COVID level of approximately 29.7 million. On the whole, cruise travel is very safe and essentially worry-free, though challenges do exist, including those relating to vessel safety and personal security while aboard or ashore.

There are an estimated 300 cruise ships active globally as of 2023, each potentially making dozens of trips each year. Safety standards are stringent; only three vessels have reportedly foundered since 2000, and none since 2012. Accidental groundings are more common, though are still relatively rare, with only five being recorded since 2015. Other safety incidents do occur, including loss of power, fires, collisions, and people falling overboard, though cruise ships typically have very robust measures in place and any incident is usually managed very well.

Personal security of passengers is also relatively high, though can be more of an issue during shore visits. According to the US Department of Transportation, in 2019 the rate of reported crimes aboard cruise ships was a mere 0.18 incidents per every 100,000 passengers, with the top crimes committed on cruise ships being theft and physical or sexual assault.

SAFETY AND SECURITY TIPS

As with any travel, there are certain basic precautions every passenger should take to avoid events that could potentially ruin their trip. Before boarding, they should ensure they have any travel documents that may be required if they plan to disembark at the vessel’s ports of call. If required, they should also ensure that the cruise ship can cater for any special dietary requirements and is accessible to any disabled and elderly persons; while no standards and regulations currently exist requiring cruise ships be accessible, many cruise lines are taking measures to accommodate disabled and elderly passengers. Once aboard, they should quickly identify where life jackets are stored, and take emergency drills seriously, familiarizing themselves with evacuation routes and security event safe havens.

While on the ship, as well as during any shore excursions, it is important for passengers to maintain situational awareness – as at any other public venue. They should keep their cabin doors locked to safeguard their persons and possessions. In addition, they should never walk alone late at night, especially on the outer decks, and avoid entering strangers’ cabins. Consumption of alcohol and other intoxicants can not only make a person more vulnerable to crime, but can also impair their ability to react in an emergency. Consumption should therefore be in moderation, and travelers should not accept drinks from strangers; drinks should not be left unattended and should be kept under observation. As on land, passengers should continue to exercise basic security precautions and report anything suspicious to a member of the crew. Valuables should be secured in the cabin or ship’s safe when not in use, though ideally, they should be left at home.
Here are our top eight picks for the best island destinations for Summer 2023. These locations were selected for their beautiful scenery and variety of offered activities to appeal to just about anyone!

Don’t forget to download the Assist America Mobile App for important updates and any assistance you may need when embarking on new adventures!
Comprised of 32 islands, **St. Vincent and the Grenadines** has something to offer every traveler. Enjoy time on the biggest island of St. Vincent in its capital, Kingstown, a port city where you’ll find a lush botanical garden and fresh fish and produce markets.

Travel to the **Turks and Caicos Islands** to see some of the most beautiful white sand beaches in the Caribbean. Home to one of the largest barrier reef systems in the world, this collection of coral islands also offers unforgettable experiences for snorkelers and scuba divers. Whether you choose to spend the bulk of your time on land or underwater, these islands make a wonderful retreat.

One of the most scenic spots in the Caribbean, the **Cayman Islands** is home to premier dive sites, including Eden Rock and Devil’s Grotto, as well as plenty of picturesque shorelines such as the world-renowned Seven Mile Beach. Stingray City also offers a sandbar and opportunities to swim with stingrays.

Visit **St. Lucia** for its sprawling chalk-colored beaches, towering volcanic peaks and upscale resorts. Start your day with a hiking adventure through the Pitons, soak up some midday sun along Reduit Beach and watch the sun set over the Caribbean Sea. You’ll also save time for a visit to Sulphur Springs, the world’s only drive-in volcano.

While you’ll certainly find the standard Caribbean staples – picture-perfect sandy beaches, verdant golf courses and palatial resorts – you’ll also discover that **Barbados** offers a unique roster of non-beach activities. Travel here to sample Mount Gay Rum, explore the limestone caverns of Harrison’s Cave and the Animal Flower Cave, attend a horse race at Garrison Savannah and dance to calypso tunes.

With 16 major islands and hundreds of islets, **the Bahamas** derives its appeal from its stunning beaches and Caribbean Sea views. The country’s beaches run the gamut from bustling Cable Beach to Pig Beach and Pink Sand Beach (both of which derive their names from their most unique characteristics). After enjoying your fill of the Caribbean sun, explore the Bahamas’ expansive protected areas, including Lucayan National Park.

Regardless of when you visit the **U.S. Virgin Islands**, try to spend at least a day enjoying the unspoiled beauty at one of the many beaches along St. John’s shoreline, including the popular Trunk Bay beach.
When traveling, each individual will potentially have their own unique challenges depending on their particular profile. One frequent time where challenges affecting one particular section of a group can impact the travel experience as a whole is when the party contains members from different age groups. Whether you are traveling with older family members, newborn children, or even teenagers pushing to be treated as independent young adults, each age group often has different aims, perceptions, and requirements that should be factored in when planning travel.

Children, for example, can be easily distracted and occasionally not realize the importance of seemingly minor issues during the journey; therefore, a competent adult should carry their travel documents. If a child is traveling with only one parent, it is also highly advisable to carry a notarized letter of consent from the other parent or evidence of sole custody. If traveling with elderly or infirm people, it is advisable to check in advance that transport and accommodation are accessible, or mobility assistance is available. Transport providers and hotels should be notified of expected arrival times if they need to provide requisite help. When planning a trip involving a mixed group comprising the elderly and the young, it is important to bear in mind that there could be more baggage than available adults. Each group member should therefore consider how to pack efficiently using as few bags as possible, and have a joint plan as to how they can carry all their luggage – as well as any small children – if they need to move quickly to catch a connection.
Often, particularly with leisure travel, different age-appropriate activities could mean that traveling groups will get separated. Ideally, each separated element of the group should have a mobile phone with the other group members’ details saved. In addition, all members of a traveling party should carry written emergency contact details in case of separation. It is also useful to agree on an emergency rendezvous point in crowded public places, such as beaches or shopping malls. Children should never be left out of line of sight unaccompanied and should only be left in the care of trusted adults.

**Health and Medical Problems**

Illnesses can affect different age groups in various ways. Traveling groups should ensure that all their companions have received the appropriate vaccinations for their trip and all adults should be familiar with any health issues within the party that could require emergency assistance. Medications may be unavailable in some locations, and might be unfamiliar. Before the trip, travelers with pre-existing medical conditions should ensure they have adequate supplies and check with their medical provider and the local health ministry of their destination that it is permitted to enter with any requisite medications; they should also research how to obtain replacement or substitute products once there. Parents in particular should make sure they have copies of their children’s immunization details and any relevant medical records.

In addition, children are typically more prone to other travel issues such as motion sickness during road travel. In such cases, they should be positioned facing forward with good ventilation in the vehicle; they should drink plenty of fluids and eat a light meal before setting off. Children also adapt more gradually to the disruption in sleep patterns due to jet lag, in some instances taking several weeks to return to a normal schedule. To assist with their adjustment, it is a good idea to shift their routine, meals, and bedtime to the new time zone. On arrival in a new time zone, children should be encouraged to the fullest extent possible to take part in outdoor activities in the sunlight while adapting to their new schedule.

**Watch the Kids**

During travel all adults should ensure they are looking out for the children. In some cases, it might be useful to designate several adults to act as monitors, with the available adults working “shifts” to ensure the children are safe. Children’s natural curiosity can lead to trouble and should be curbed in unfamiliar environments. Strange animals, in particular, could pose a threat, as unwelcome petting could provoke a dog or a cat to bite or scratch; in many parts of the world, animals can carry diseases, such as rabies, which could potentially have serious consequences.
Before embarking on any excursion, it’s important to ensure that you have your bases covered and everything packed that you’ll need during the length of your trip. Here is our ultimate packing guide to help you prepare for any trip. Print and detach to use the checklist and, as always, no preparation is complete without downloading the Assist America Mobile App for assistance on the go, anywhere in the world.