

Australian Air Passenger Travel Guide

Your guide to flying in Australia. Book right, fly prepared and get help when things go wrong.

Introduction

This guide provides practical information for air travel in Australia to help make your experience a positive one. It sets out what you, as a passenger, need to know about your rights and responsibilities when flying, and breaks down your journey into stages:

- Plan Smart – planning your trip
- Book Smart – booking your trip
- Before and at the airport
- On the flight and arriving at your destination airport.

It also includes information on:

- delayed, lost and damaged baggage
- making a complaint
- travelling for people with a disability
- useful contacts and handy resources.

This guide is not:

- a substitute for airline terms and conditions
- airport policies
- insurance documents or legal advice.

Always consult your airline, airport and/or the relevant authority to gain a complete understanding of your travel requirements.

Australia is developing a new Aviation Consumer Protection Framework, to better protect the rights of airline and airport consumers.

The Framework will include an **Aviation Consumer Protection Charter** that will set the minimum standards aviation consumers can expect from airlines and airports. It will also include an **Aviation Consumer Ombudsperson**, to give consumers access to an impartial dispute resolution body to handle complaints about airlines and airports. The **Aviation Consumer Protection Authority** will enforce the Charter. Check www.infrastructure.gov.au for updates.

SECTION 01

Plan Smart

Good preparation starts well before you reach the airport. Doing your homework, booking smart, having the right documents, and being adequately insured can save significant time, money and stress.

It pays to shop around for best schedules, ticket prices and your choice of airline. Travel search engines can be handy for comparisons and to see what's possible for your preferred destination. Browse online reviews for airlines. Check out airline on-time performance at the [Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics \(BITRE\) website](#).

Book your trip early to increase the chances of better flight options and prices. When you book may affect prices and options. There may higher priced and fewer seats available on popular travel days.

Always consider travel insurance including for domestic flights. Ideally, you should buy travel insurance before booking or as soon after as possible, to ensure you're covered – including if you need to cancel your trip. See the [Travel Insurance](#) section for more info.

Allow extra time for unforeseen events. Consider booking an earlier flight or arriving a day early to ensure you don't miss your tour, cruise or other important event.

Travelling with disability? Plan ahead for a smooth journey. There are a range of supports available to you. See our [Travelling with Disability](#) section.

Travelling with children? Flying with children requires additional planning. See our [Children and Travel](#) section.

Travelling overseas? Check travel advice, entry requirements and travel documents for destinations you're travelling to on the [Smartraveller website](#) and see the [Flying Overseas](#) section for more info.

Make sure you're fit to fly. If you have a medical condition or have recently had surgery, you may require medical clearance to board your flight. This process will usually involve obtaining documentation from your airline that will then need to be completed by your doctor and submitted back to the airline for review before you are considered fit to fly. It is important that you complete this procedure with enough time to ensure that you are not denied boarding at the airport. [Contact your airline](#) to find out their specific medical clearance process.

Travelling with pets? Confirm whether your airline allows pets and review their conditions and fees. Certain airlines permit pets only in the cargo hold through freight services or pet travel experts, while others allow pets in the cabin. If your pet is going in the cargo hold, make sure the crate meets [International Air Travel Association \(IATA\) standards](#) and is the right size. Be aware that some animal breeds might be subject to restrictions.

Travel Insurance



Travel insurance is not mandatory yet is strongly recommended by the Australian Government. Without it, you may bear the full cost of medical emergencies, cancellations, lost luggage, and other unexpected events. Some countries won't let you in if you don't have insurance.

Not all travel insurance policies are the same, and you should always check product disclosure statements and fine print.

A GOOD POLICY SHOULD COVER THINGS LIKE:	WATCH FOR THESE EXCLUSIONS:
- Overseas medical expenses including evacuation - Trip cancellation and curtailment - Travel delay expenses - Lost, stolen, or damaged baggage - Personal liability	- Pre-existing medical conditions - High-risk activities (skiing, diving) - Destinations under Department of foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) 'Do Not Travel' advisories - Pandemics and government travel bans

Smartraveller has partnered with CHOICE to provide you with an [easy-to-read guide](#) on how to choose the best travel insurance for your trip.

Ideally, you should buy travel insurance at the time of booking or shortly after to ensure you're covered in the event of any issues before your journey – including if you need to cancel your trip.

TIP

Some credit cards include complimentary travel insurance. Always check coverage is sufficient and activated, noting it's usually a requirement to pay for travel on that card. Read the Product Disclosure Statement (PDS).

Flying overseas

The [Smartraveller website](#) has a wealth of travel advice for when you're flying overseas including information on safety, health, local laws and consular assistance. Subscribe to the free Smartraveller subscription service to receive travel advice and alerts to the destinations you are travelling to and through.

The Australian Government provides consular assistance to Australians overseas. The [Consular Services Charter](#) outlines the help they may provide. If you need consular assistance, contact your nearest [Australian embassy or consulate](#) or call the 24-hour consular emergency centre on:

- +61 2 6261 3305 **from overseas**
- 1300 555 135 **in Australia**

Passport & Travel Documents

All Australian citizens require a valid passport for international travel. The [Australian Passport Office in DFAT](#) issues Australian passports. Many countries require at least 6 months of passport validity beyond your planned departure date. Check specific entry requirements for your destination on the Smartraveller website.

Research visa requirements well in advance. Some countries offer visa-on-arrival or eVisas and others require applying weeks or months ahead.

Children must hold their own passport and cannot be added to a parent's passport. Some carriers require children travelling alone, including on domestic flights, to have photo ID like a passport.

Declaring items

Travellers arriving in Australia must declare certain items, especially food, plant or animal products, as they may pose biosecurity risks. If you're unsure, declare it or dispose of it before screening, as penalties may apply for failing to declare, but not for declaring prohibited items.

For more information on what can be brought in and out of Australia, and what items need to be declared, visit the [Australian Border Force website](#).

Carrying expensive items

If you're departing Australia with expensive items, such as computers and cameras, and you intend to bring them back to Australia, register these items on the B263 Goods exported in passenger baggage form: [B263 - Goods Exported in Passenger Baggage](#).

You can't use this form if you intend claiming a refund under the [Tourist Refund Scheme](#). The goods registered must be easily identifiable and include information like serial numbers.

Goods purchased [duty or tax free](#) in Australia must be taken with you and inspected at the departure point. You may also need to declare these on your return.

Children and Travel

It's important to plan when travelling with children.

Make sure you have the required ID for children and understand children baggage allowances, as some airline requirements may differ. Be aware that all children are required to be security screened, even those who are unaccompanied.

Pack into your carryon luggage any food or medicines your child will need in the airport or onboard your flight and check the airline rules. If your child has a serious medical condition or one that may affect their ability to travel, let the airline know before you fly. Plan for unforeseen situations like:

- there are no empty seats
- there are no baby changing tables
- your child won't or can't eat the airline's food
- the airline delays your flight
- the airline loses your checked luggage.

The [Civil Aviation Safety Authority's website](#) provides helpful information regarding requirements when travelling with children.

Infants

In Australia, an infant is a child who has not turned 2 years of age, although airline rules can differ, especially on overseas carriers. Check the rules of your overseas airline operator.

Seating

Airline seat allocation procedures for family groups, children and infants aim to seat children close to their parents or guardians in the same seat row. Where this isn't possible, an airline might separate children by no more than one seat row or aisle away from their accompanying adults. This allows adults to reach their children quickly during an emergency evacuation.

Try to seat small children beside the window or in between 2 responsible adults. This helps prevent them getting bumped by a passing person or serving cart.

You can secure an infant on your lap with a supplementary loop belt. The cabin crew will give you one before take-off and let you know how to use it. Children over the age of 2 years must occupy their own seat and can't sit on your lap.

Bassinets

You can use bassinets mounted on a bulkhead, except during take-off or landing. You should make sure to stow it away during these times, so as not to interfere with an evacuation.

Child restraint systems

You may consider using a child restraint system (e.g. a car seat approved for use on commercial aircraft) as it provides a higher level of safety. Your airline needs to approve this, so check with your airline in advance and ensure the product you're using will fit in your booked seat. Booster seats without an internal harness cannot be used on flights in Australia. Once a child has outgrown their full harness child restraint, it's safe for them to use the aircraft seat and lap belt. Always ensure that their seatbelt remains fastened at all times whilst on board.

Unaccompanied minors

An unaccompanied minor is a child aged 5 to 11, though exact age limits vary by carrier. Some airlines offer supervised support, including check-in assistance, escorting the child to boarding, in-flight supervision and handover to a nominated guardian at the destination.

Other young unaccompanied Passengers

Airlines may offer support to other young unaccompanied passengers typically aged between 11 and 15, on a voluntary basis. This service identifies to airline staff and crew that the young passenger is travelling on their own and may require additional assistance, especially in case of disruptions.

QUICK TIPS

- Check if the airline offers an unaccompanied minor service, how to book it and if there's a fee.
- Fill in any forms the airline requires and bring ID for the child, the adult dropping them off and the adult picking them up.
- Get to the airport early so there's enough time for check-in and paperwork.
- Check where your child will be collected by airline staff and if the adult dropping them off needs to stay until the plane has taken off.
- If your child has a connecting flight, ensure the airline is aware and if any restrictions apply.
- If your child has a medical condition or allergy, tell the airline before you travel and pack any medicine in their carry-on bag.

SECTION 02

Book Smart



Read terms and conditions (T&Cs) and airline conditions of carriage carefully before booking and paying. T&Cs should always be made available at the time of booking and should include information about cancellations, refunds and changes in plans.

Plan your booking carefully so you understand fare rules, inclusions and who is responsible if your travel plans change. Always book through official, reputable airlines, travel agents or travel sites. For useful links to airline and airport terms and conditions, see [the Department of Infrastructure's website on Airline and Airport information](#).

To connect passengers across networks, many airlines enter arrangements with each other known as **interline** or **codeshare partnerships**. These agreements enable the marketing carrier to sell seats on partner airlines, who in turn are referred to as the operating carrier. If you are travelling on an airline other than the one that sold you your ticket, pay attention to whether the terms and conditions of the marketing carrier or the operating carrier are applicable, as baggage allowances, check-in procedures and other rules may differ materially.

BEFORE YOU BUY, CHECK:

- **Fare class and flexibility.** Not all tickets are created equal. 'Saver' or 'Light' fares often carry strict no-refund policies and may include limited care and support, such as food and accommodation during significant delays. Flexible fares may cost more yet allow more capacity to change your booking and avoid or reduce additional fees.
- **Inclusions.** Budget carriers frequently charge extra for services like checked baggage, seat selection, meals and in-flight entertainment.
- **Baggage allowances.** Restrictions on size, weight and pieces of hand luggage or checked baggage can differ significantly between airlines. Pre-purchase extra baggage online, as the fees you'll be charged at the airport are higher. If you're on multi-flight trip with different airlines then note different baggage allowances may apply even if you've paid extra. Check carefully to avoid problems.
- **Requirements relating to infants, minors and young children.** Review seating, baggage allowances and ID requirements. See the [Children and Travel](#) section for more information.
- **Minimum connection time (MCT).** MCT is the shortest amount of time needed for you and your luggage to switch from one flight to another, and can differ between airports, airlines and international or domestic connections. Reduce the risk of missing a connection by allowing more than the MCT between flights. If in doubt, check with your airline, travel agent or booking platform.
- **Total price.** Under Australian Consumer Law, the advertised price must be the total price you pay, inclusive of mandatory taxes and charges. Any charges for optional extras, such as excess baggage allowance or seat selection, should be made clear at the time of booking.
- **Your details are correct before you pay.** Ensure names on your booking match your ID exactly, including full name, spelling or any hyphens. Also check that your contact information is correct. Verify dates, times, routes and airports. When you're crossing over time zones, double check your arrival and departure times are correct. Errors caught within 24 hours might be fixed for free - contact the airline or agent as soon as possible to explore your options and avoid challenges.
- **Seating:** If where you sit matters, consider pre-selecting your seat. Fees may apply depending on the ticket purchased.
 - **Exit rows** offer legroom but come with responsibilities, including a safety briefing by the cabin crew when on board to help in an emergency. The Civil Aviation Authority of Australia (CASA) has [guidelines](#) for exit row eligibility, and your airline may have additional criteria.

- **Personal Comfort:** If you require more room, discuss your options with your airline or travel agent. Some airlines offer 'neighbour-free seating' for an additional cost. Seating in another cabin class may provide you with sufficient room.
- **Dietary requirements:** If you have any dietary requirements during your flight, **special meal requests** are best made at the time of booking or at least 48 hours prior to travel. While airlines will make every effort to accommodate your dietary needs, meal options may sometimes be limited. Check with your airline for specific requirements.

Travel Agents

Travel agents can be helpful, particularly for complex trips, and they come with their own fees, terms and conditions. It's important to understand their role in your booking and what that can mean if something goes wrong.

Travel agents can offer convenience, services and support, yet they also add an extra layer between you and the airline. Understanding this relationship helps you make informed choices and know what to expect if your travel plans change.

The Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) maintains a list of accredited travel agencies and tour operators on the [ATIA Travel Tick website](#). Agents and operators who hold ATIA accreditation are required to conduct business in compliance with Australian Consumer Law and in accordance with their Accreditation Scheme Charter and Code of Conduct.

Travel agents act as intermediaries. When you book through a travel agent, including online travel agents, your ticket is usually purchased through the agent rather than directly from the airline. This can mean:

- **Changes and refunds are handled by the agent.** Refunds may take longer as they are usually issued through the agent. Airlines can't assist if you are waiting for the agent to provide the refund, or if the agent deducts fees from the refund amount.
- **Communication can be more complex.** Important updates about your travel may be received through your agent, rather than receiving them directly from the airline. This could mean that you may have a delay in receiving information or not receive the most up to date details, which is a common problem. An airline may refer you to your agent if you need assistance with changes or have questions about your journey. This can complicate matters, particularly during delays or cancellations and if your agent is in a different time zone and you can't contact them.
- **Travel agents are separate businesses.** Not all agents operate the same way.
- **Fees and terms and conditions can vary.** Agents may charge service fees for booking, changing or cancelling travel, and may have different terms and conditions. These fees and terms are set by the agent, not the airline, and can be significant for changes or refunds. Some budget agents may not rebook you when a cancellation occurs but simply refund your ticket, leaving you exposed to higher prices if you need a new booking close to a flight date.
- **Standards and services can vary.** Agents based in Australia can join recognised accreditation or industry systems. Other agents, particularly those online, may be based overseas, have limited local customer support, could be difficult to contact and have no contractual relationship with airlines. If an agent is based overseas, it may be difficult to enforce your rights under Australian Consumer Law or resolve disputes through domestic complaint handling bodies.

Booking directly with an airline can be simpler during disruptions. Many travellers choose to book directly with airlines because it can make it easier to receive timely information and deal directly with the airline's support team. If you prefer an agent, you can help avoid some challenges by:

- requesting your agent puts your contact details into the ticketing system so you can receive information updates directly, and
- asking how you can contact them out of hours for help during disruptions.

★ QUICK TIPS

- Always read your airline's Conditions of Carriage, especially inclusions, baggage allowances, cancellation and rebooking terms.
- Stop and consider before booking a very cheap deal that is going fast! It may come with extra costs later.
- Visit smartraveller.gov.au to check travel advice for the countries you're visiting.
- Check entry requirements and passport validity. Aim for at least 6 months beyond your return date.
- Buy travel insurance as soon as you pay for your trip.

SECTION 03

Before & at the Airport

Monitor your flight and be alert for changes

Your flight details, such as check-in time, departure time and gate can change. Keep an eye on emails, texts or app messages for updates from the airline or travel agent.

Most airlines have apps that you can download and have the information in one place. Apps can be useful to:

- get timely flight status updates and alerts
- check-in to get your boarding pass on your phone
- view boarding gate information
- track your checked baggage, and
- access other useful information like in-flight entertainment and frequent flyer points.

Pack right for a safe flight

Pack safely to avoid delays or missing your flight. Even your everyday items such as power banks, scissors, lithium batteries, aerosols, powders and gels can carry restrictions. Some items are allowed only in the cabin or checked baggage, while others require airline or civil aviation authority approval. Certain items must be shipped as cargo, and some are prohibited on all flights.

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) provides a [helpful guide](#) on what you can and can't pack, and guidance on how to pack these items. The Department of Home Affairs also provides information on [TravelSECURE](#) about what you can and can't bring on board an aircraft or into the secure area of an airport.

Packing tips

Check your airline's baggage rules before you travel as size, weight and item limits vary. Your carry-on may be checked at the gate, which could result in repacking, fees or items being removed. Some packing tips are below:

- Pack your own bags and avoid overpacking.
- Use a sturdy, lockable bag and label it inside and out with your contact details.
- Review [CASA's Pack Right guidance](#) on dangerous and restricted items.
- Carry spare batteries and power banks in your cabin baggage (note: in-flight use may be restricted).
- Check your airline's policy on electronic devices.
- Keep essential items, valuables, medicines and fragile items in your carry-on. Airline compensation may be limited if these items are in checked baggage.
- Keep receipts (or photos of them) for purchased items in your luggage.
- Tell your airline about any special needs in advance.
- Consider using a luggage tracking device and ensure it is charged.

Dangerous goods, restricted and banned items

Dangerous goods are items that can be harmful or unsafe on an aircraft. They might be flammable, explosive, toxic, or react dangerously with other substances. Some dangerous goods are banned from flights. You can pack others but only with airline approval or special packing. See [CASA's Pack Right guide on dangerous goods](#) for more information.

Common dangerous goods include:

- vapes and e-cigarettes
- spare batteries and power banks
- portable electronic devices
- aerosols and toiletries
- cleaning products and chemicals
- fuels and petrol-powered items
- matches, lighters and fireworks.

You should also be aware of restricted or [banned items](#), including (e.g.) some types of batteries, flammable items and chemicals.

When you check-in online or at the airport, you must declare any dangerous goods in your baggage. Airports routinely screen carry-on and checked baggage for dangerous goods like spare batteries and power banks. If they detect dangerous goods in your checked baggage, they may remove your bag resulting in a missed flight or your luggage left behind.

If you fail to declare a dangerous good or make a misleading or false declaration, you could face serious penalties – up to 7 years jail.

Prohibited Items

Some items are prohibited because they are a security risk. You cannot carry prohibited items beyond the security screening point or on board an aircraft. Prohibited items include weapons and some common household items and sporting goods that people can use as weapons or to cause harm to a person or an aircraft.

This includes replicas or imitations of weapons. You may need to surrender prohibited items at the security screening check point. For more information on prohibited items, check TravelSECURE.

Lithium batteries

Lithium batteries power everyday items like phones, laptops, and cameras, but you must pack them safely to prevent hazards. Always take spare batteries and power banks with you in the cabin. Never place spare batteries or power banks in checked luggage. For more information, visit [CASA's safety tips for travelling with lithium batteries](#).

Devices with batteries may be packed in checked or carry-on bags if you turn them off completely and ensure they're protected from damage or accidental activation during flight.

Airlines may limit the number of spare batteries and power banks you can carry—check with your airline before flying. Certain international airports may not allow you to pass through security if your power bank does not comply with their domestic certification standards, so ensure your device is permitted through any airports you travel through.

Travelling with medications and medical devices

Several Australian Government organisations have a role in overseeing travel with medicines and medical devices. For further information, see:

Agency	Information	Website
Therapeutic Goods Administration	Resources & information on rules and requirements	www.tga.gov.au/resources/consumer-information-and-resources/travelling-medicines-and-medical-devices
Services Australia	Medicare's guidelines for travelling with Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines	www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-to-manage-your-pbs-medicine-overseas?context=22016
Smarttraveller	Advice about travelling with medicines and medical equipment	https://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/before-you-go/health/medications
TravelSECURE	Restrictions and exemptions for liquids, aerosols and gels on international flights	www.homeaffairs.gov.au/travelsecure-subsite/files/fact-sheet-travelling-with-powders-liquids-aerosols-gels-2025.pdf
Australian Border Force	Guidelines for what you can and can't bring into Australia	www.abf.gov.au/entering-and-leaving-australia/can-you-bring-it-in/categories/medicines-and-substances

For medicines allowed on board, carry enough for your trip in your carry-on, along with a doctor's letter or prescription if you're travelling overseas.

Liquids, Aerosols and Gels

Domestic and international travel may have different limits on the amount of powders, liquids, aerosols and gels you can carry onto an airplane.

International flights often require all liquid, aerosol and gel items to be in containers of 100 millilitres/grams or less. All aerosol containers must have a fitted cap or locking device.

The restrictions apply in the following situations:

- when departing Australia
- when transiting through Australia from one country to another
- when travelling on the domestic leg of a flight departing from an Australian international terminal
- prior to boarding an inbound flight at its last point of departure before it reaches Australia
 - Note that inbound flight restrictions may be applied at the boarding gate at the last point of departure

Duty Free Items: If you buy duty free items before you get to the airport, we recommend packing them in your checked baggage. Duty free products are subject to powders, liquids, aerosols, and gels restrictions. Check the restrictions for powders, liquids, aerosols, and gels.

Restrictions on liquids, aerosols and gels also apply if you are arriving in Australia on an international flight. For more information visit the [Australian Border Force website](http://www.abf.gov.au).

If you're flying within Australia on a domestic flight, there are no restrictions on the amount of powders, liquids, aerosols and gels you can carry on board. If you're travelling domestically, but departing from an international terminal, you will be subject to the rules for international travel.

Plan your journey to the airport

It's your responsibility to arrive at the airport and departure gate on time, including allowing enough time to clear security and any other screening. Check your airline's website or app to confirm when you need to arrive. If you plan to check in at the airport, identify when check-in closes.

Plan how you will get to the airport and allow extra time for traffic, public transport delays or busy periods such as school holidays or Christmas. If you're driving, consider pre-booking parking to avoid delays.

Airports often publish useful information on terminal layouts, facilities and any works that may affect access. As airports are large and can take time to navigate, allow enough time to get from your arrival point to the correct terminal and gate. If you have accessibility needs, review your [airport's website](#) for information on drop-off points and how to arrange assistance.

If you're travelling overseas, allow extra time for border processing, which can involve long queues. Some cities have multiple airports or separate domestic and international terminals at different locations. Check your departure details in advance to ensure you arrive at the correct location.

Checking in and bag drop

Many airlines offer online check-in via their app or website. Checking-in before you get to the airport can save you time by skipping queues, providing your boarding pass, and may help secure better seats. It also secures your place on the flight, as failing to check-in by the deadline means you may not be able to board your flight.

If you are travelling on a codeshare flight that is operated by an airline different from the one that you booked with, you will usually need to check-in at the counter of the operating carrier.

Check-in closes at different times depending on the airline and where you're travelling to. Even if you're checked-in online, you must still adhere to bag drop (including self-service drop off) and boarding gate deadlines. Your airline will usually tell you what time you need to check in and get to the departure gate. Airlines may recommend a different time frames for passengers with reduced mobility or needing special assistance, so be sure to confirm this in advance and let airline staff know.

If you have checked-in baggage, remember to keep a record of your baggage receipt. It can be helpful to photograph your baggage and receipt just in case it is delayed, damaged or lost.

Security screening

Security screening is compulsory for all passengers. Airports and their service providers are directly responsible for passenger screening in line with requirements set by the Department of Home Affairs.

For security screening information, including your rights at the security screening point, what you can take on board, and screening processes available for people with special circumstances, visit the [Department of Home Affairs website](#).

If you have any questions or are uncomfortable at any time throughout the security screening process at an Australian airport, the Department of Home Affairs advises you to speak with a supervisor at the screening point. You can also lodge a complaint by directly [contacting the airport](#).

Special circumstances at security screening

Airports can use alternative screening methods, where appropriate, to ensure all passengers are treated with respect and dignity. For more information, visit the [TravelSECURE](#) website.

Gender diverse passengers: If you feel uncomfortable during screening, you can request a different screening officer or ask to speak with a supervisor.

Cultural or religious requirements: You may be asked to remove items such as headwear for inspection. While you can refuse, you may not be cleared through security and allowed to fly. You can request to remove items in a private room.

Disability or hidden disability: Where possible, security screening officers will allow people with disabilities or hidden disabilities to keep their medical or support items with them while going through the screening process. We suggest carrying evidence, such as a letter from your doctor, if there are screening methods that may not be suitable. This will help the screening officer to choose an appropriate method of screening for your circumstances.

Assistance animals: You and your animal may be screened together or separately. You can request to remain together, and alternative methods will be used.

Medicines, medical devices and mobility aids: Bring a doctor's letter or medical ID to help with screening. Tell the screening officer if your device cannot go through scanners or X-rays. Keep your medication and supporting documents ready for inspection. If carrying items like hypodermic needles, show these at screening and when boarding. If you use a mobility aid or cannot complete body scanner requirements, alternative screening methods will be used.

Border control

If you're travelling internationally, you'll need to pass through border control. Remember, all departing passengers must have a valid passport or travel document. For more information about arriving and departing Australia, please visit the Australian Border Force's guide to [Crossing the Border](#).

At the gate and boarding

Make sure you're at the gate well before boarding, especially if you require special assistance to board. Have your boarding pass and ID ready. If you're late to the gate or haven't checked in, you may not be allowed on the flight.

Carry-on baggage checks may be done at the gate, so ensure you're within your allowance. Non-compliance can result in the bag being gate checked (stored in the hold and not able to be taken into the aircraft with you) or denied and may result in excess charges.

Most Australian airlines have a policy of ensuring people who need boarding assistance will board before other passengers. Trained airline staff can help you get to and from your seat if you're not mobile enough to do it yourself. For medium or large planes, this may include using boarding ramps, jet bridges or lifts. If you've requested an aisle seat but weren't given one, ask a flight attendant to swap your seat where possible.

Remember that an airline has the authority to refuse to board any passenger who displays behaviour that presents a risk to the safety of the aircraft, or people on people on the aircraft and their property.

Other useful tips at the airport

Pay attention to announcements. Allocated departure times and gates can change with little notice. Listen for announcements, speak with airline staff and check flight information boards for gate changes or boarding times. If you're waiting at the gate and see no staff or other passengers when boarding time approaches, double check your gate has not changed.

Stay with your bags. For security reasons, never leave your luggage and personal items unattended at the airport.

Behave sensibly. Unruly, disruptive and disorderly behaviour can result in being denied boarding and can lead to intervention by Australian Federal Police in Australian airports.

Drink responsibly. While it can be tempting to have a few drinks before your flight, it's an offence to enter an aircraft intoxicated.

If you miss your flight. If despite all your good planning you miss your flight, contact your airline quickly to see what can be done to assist you. This is especially important if you're on a multi-itinerary international flight. Your airline may have conditions that state if you fail to show up for a flight, and don't make contact, you then forfeit all future flights on the itinerary with no refund rights.

What happens if your flight is delayed, disrupted, or cancelled?

Flight delays and cancellations can occur for many reasons, including weather, air traffic control and airport restrictions outside the airline's control. Your options and any assistance depend on the airline's policies, the cause of the disruption and how you booked.

If your flight is delayed or cancelled:

- check updates from the airline (app, SMS, email or airport screens)
- speak with airline staff at the airport
- contact your travel agent if you booked through one, and
- make sure your contact details are up to date.

Booking directly with the airline will usually help with changes. If you booked through a travel agent or third-party platform, you may need to contact them instead.

Airlines must set out their policies in their conditions of carriage or customer charters. Depending on the circumstances, some airlines may offer meals, accommodation or transfers for significant delays. This assistance is not always automatic, so ask what is available. Keep receipts if you incur expenses, as you may be able to seek reimbursement under airline policies or travel insurance.

Your entitlements are generally determined by the airline's terms and conditions and the Australian Consumer Law (ACL). Under the ACL, you may be entitled to remedies, such as a refund or replacement service, if you do not receive what you paid for.

If your flight is disrupted, airlines will generally offer:

- **Rebooking** if you still need to travel
- **Refund** if you no longer wish to travel (timing and fees may vary, especially if booked through an agent)

Travel insurance may cover some costs, depending on your policy and the reason for the disruption. Check your coverage and keep supporting documents.

For more information about your consumer rights if your flight is disrupted, please visit the [Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's](#) (ACCC) website or visit our website.

★ QUICK TIPS

- Check in online 24–48 hours before to avoid queues
- Follow your airline's advice on when you should arrive at the airport
- Check [casa.gov.au/packright](#) before packing hazardous or specialist items
- Pre-purchase extra baggage allowance online — this is always cheaper than at the airport
- Be kind to others, especially when things go wrong
- Know who to contact for assistance if you encounter flight delays, disruptions or cancellations

SECTION 04

On the flight

Your safety and behaviour

Your behaviour plays a key part in ensuring that you and other passengers fly safely and comfortably.

Your cabin crew are there to ensure your safety while embarking, during the flight and disembarking. Make sure you always follow their directions.

Follow the cabin crew's instructions on how to stow your cabin baggage. You can put it in the overhead compartment, or under the seat in front of you, unless you're in an exit row.

Before your flight takes-off cabin crew will provide a safety demonstration. It's important you listen to this demonstration.

You must behave appropriately on your flight, and can't do things like use threatening language, interfere with crew/equipment, smoke, drink your own alcohol, or disobey instructions. If you don't follow these directions, airline personnel and police can issue a verbal or written warning. Passengers engaging in a disorderly, unruly or disruptive manner can be fine, prosecuted and in some cases restrained and placed under arrest.

If you're travelling with children, supervise your child at all times. Check out the [Children and Travel](#) section for your responsibilities while in the cabin.

If you're seated in an exit row, you'll need to meet the eligibility criteria and confirm you understand the safety briefing before take-off. You must put down all electronic devices, books and newspapers and listen to the briefing. You may be removed from the exit row if you don't listen.

You can use your mobile phone and other personal electronic devices safely on flights, but you must follow all on-board procedures and the crew's instructions. All devices must stay in flight mode throughout the flight. Some airlines may offer WiFi streaming for in-flight entertainment or internet connectivity. However, you aren't allowed to use mobile telephone functions in flight.

In the unlikely event of an aircraft evacuation, every second counts. Always listen to crew instructions, move quickly, and leave all belongings behind.

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) sets the safety standards for Australian aviation. See CASA's [instructional videos](#) and [website](#) for more information on cabin safety and behaviour.

★ QUICK TIPS

- Report any damage to your carry on to crew or ground staff as soon as possible
- Charge devices before flying as onboard charging is not always available
- Identify the nearest emergency exit and note how many rows away it is
- Keep your seatbelt fastened whenever seated, even when the sign is off
- Stay hydrated — cabin air is very dry (only 10–20% humidity).
- Notify crew immediately if there is a medical emergency as they are trained in first aid
- Before leaving the aircraft, check seat pockets and overhead lockers for all your belongings

SECTION 05

Arriving at your destination airport

Domestic arrivals

If you have checked-in baggage, head to the carousel and double-check tags to avoid grabbing someone else's bag.

Arriving from overseas

If you're arriving back in Australia from overseas, you'll need to complete an [Incoming Passenger Card](#). If you're not an Australian citizen, make sure you hold a [valid visa](#) where required.

See the [Flying Overseas](#) section for information on what items need to be declared. Be honest, as heavy penalties may apply for non-compliance.

Border Force officers have legislative powers to conduct baggage examinations and question you to identify breaches of certain customs, quarantine and other Commonwealth legislation, including the import and export of prohibited goods. If you have any concerns about questioning or examination, you should direct your inquiry to the officer or their supervisor at the time of questioning.

For more information, visit the [Australian Border Force's website](#).

SECTION 06

Delayed, lost or damaged baggage

If your baggage does not arrive, or is damaged, report it immediately at the airport before leaving the baggage hall. Most airlines have a dedicated baggage desk in the arrivals area. Strict time limits often apply, and if you report outside these timeframes, the airline may not accept your claim. Always check your airline's requirements.

It is important to [contact your airline](#), not the airport, as the airline is responsible for baggage handling. If your journey involved multiple flights, the airline that operated your final flight is usually responsible for managing your claim.

Carrier liability and your rights

Airline responsibility for delayed, lost or damaged baggage depends on a range of factors. These include whether your travel is domestic or international, the airline's conditions of carriage, and the circumstances of the loss or damage. Passenger protections are set out in international and Australian law, including the *Montreal Convention* and the *Civil Aviation (Carriers' Liability) Act 1959*, which establish minimum standards of liability.

If you have travel insurance, review your policy and Product Disclosure Statement to understand what you are covered for and any claim requirements. Many insurers require you to first lodge a claim with the airline before seeking reimbursement through your policy.

Delayed or lost baggage

Baggage can sometimes be delayed, particularly if you are connecting between flights. If this happens, report the delay before leaving the airport so the airline can begin tracing your bag. You will usually need to complete a report and provide details such as your booking reference, contact information and a description of your baggage, including the baggage tag number and identifying features.

Keep a record of any reference numbers the airline provides, as you will need these for tracking or future claims. If your baggage is delayed while you are away from home, airlines may reimburse reasonable expenses for essential items, such as toiletries or clothing while you wait for your baggage. Keep all receipts to support any claim.

If your baggage cannot be located, it is generally considered lost after 21 days. At that point, you may need to submit a formal claim and provide evidence of the value of your belongings, such as receipts or other proof of purchase.

Damaged baggage

If your baggage is damaged, report it as soon as possible at the airport and complete the airline's claim form. As with delayed baggage, time limits apply, so prompt reporting is important.

If your claim is accepted, the airline may repair or replace your baggage or offer compensation. However, airlines are not usually liable for certain types of damage, such as normal wear and tear, minor scratches, inherent defects, or damage caused by overpacking or unsuitable packing. For full details, check your airline's conditions of carriage.

Damaged mobility equipment

If you're travelling with mobility equipment such as a wheelchair and it is damaged during your journey, ensure it is immediately reported to the airline at the baggage hall before leaving the airport. Take photos of the damage to your equipment and ensure to include the baggage tag in the image if it was checked in during your journey. The airline may be required to provide you with temporary mobility equipment whilst repairs are done. It's important you retain records of your flight, including booking confirmation and your boarding pass and evidence of the damage and correspondence with the airline. This may be required for further reimbursement depending on the scope of the damage.

SECTION 07

Making a Complaint

Australia is establishing a new Aviation Consumer Ombuds Scheme, which will give consumers access to an impartial dispute resolution body to handle complaints about airlines and airports. Check infrastructure.gov.au for updates.

An interim ombudsperson has been appointed from within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts to help develop the new Aviation Consumer Protections Scheme and support improved outcomes for aviation consumers in the short term. Where the interim ombudsperson receives direct complaints about charter-related airline and airport or other matters, relevant information and referrals may be provided to customers, and matters escalated further where appropriate.

The new Aviation Consumer Ombuds Scheme is not currently legislated. In the interim, you should follow the steps below and use existing channels to resolve your complaint.

Step-by-step complaint & escalation process

If something goes wrong, there is a clear complaint and escalation pathway you should follow.

Step 1 — Contact the airline, airport or travel agent

Start by contacting the airline, airport or travel agent. Most have information on their websites about complaints, including terms and conditions and complaint processes.

- Check the relevant terms and conditions to understand your rights.
- Follow the organisation's complaint process and timeframes.
- If you booked through a travel agent, their terms may also apply.
- Keep records of your complaint, including any reference number.

For useful links to airline and airport terms and conditions, and other contact information, visit the [Department of Infrastructure's website](#). If your issue relates to consumer rights, see the [ACCC website](#). For international travel, the [Montreal Convention](#) may also apply.

It is important that you only use official channels when contacting your airline, as submitting personal information on social media or to unverified email addresses may result in consequences such as scams or identity theft.

Codeshare flights

A codeshare is a common airline arrangement where one airline sells the ticket, but the flight is operated by another airline. If your flight is operated by a different airline than the one you booked with, contact the operating airline about your complaint, and keep in mind that the applicable terms and conditions may be those imposed by either airline, depending on the codeshare agreement and carrier policies.

Step 2 — Request escalation

If you're not satisfied with the airline or airport's response, request an internal review through the airline or airport's internal escalation and review process.

Step 3 — Contact an external body, if unresolved

If your complaint is still unresolved after following internal processes, you can contact an appropriate external body:

Body	When to contact	Key details
Airline Customer Advocate (ACA)	Complaints about Qantas, Jetstar or Virgin	Independent scheme with eligibility criteria . Requires you to have first complained to the airline. Contact: 1800 813 129
State or territory consumer protection agencies	Potential breaches of Australian Consumer Law	ACCC directs complaints to state/territory agencies (e.g. NSW Fair Trading, Consumer Affairs Victoria). Most offer National Relay Service
Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA)	Complaints about ATIA-accredited travel agents	Independent complaints process . Not all agents are accredited
Department of Home Affairs	Issues with airport security screening	Can provide feedback or report significant concerns via its website
Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)	Discrimination or human rights concerns	Handles complaints about unlawful discrimination
International regulators	Issues arising overseas	You may need to contact the regulator in the country where the issue occurred
Interim Aviation Ombudsperson	Aviation consumer issues (general guidance)	Provides information, referrals and may escalate issues where appropriate

Step 4 — Tribunal or court

As a last resort, you may take action through a state or territory tribunal or court. This can be costly and time-consuming, so consider seeking legal advice first (for example, through legal aid services).

★ QUICK TIPS

- Be specific: include booking reference, flight number, date and times
- Obtain a reference number for your complaint
- State your legal basis: refer to the airline/airport's conditions of carriage and if possible, reference the Australian Consumer Law guarantee you believe was breached
- Clearly state what you want: refund, compensation, or apology
- Keep evidence and records: boarding passes, receipts, photos, emails, and keep a record of all conversations and correspondence
- Be factual and polite and avoid emotional language — focus on facts, dates, and impact

SECTION 08

Travelling with disability

Air travel can be challenging for people who require additional assistance. Physical, medical, sensory and communication barriers, unfamiliar environments and time pressures can make travel stressful without appropriate planning and support.

You may need help at different stages of your journey, including booking, getting to and through the airport, boarding, during the flight, disembarking and transferring between flights.

People with disability have the right to travel safely and with dignity, including access to services, facilities and reasonable adjustments, regardless of the type or visibility of disability. Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, discrimination in air travel is unlawful and includes being denied reasonable access to airline or airport services.

Planning your flight

Check accessibility options

Airports and airlines offer a range of supports to improve accessibility, safety and independence. Before booking, check that services meet your needs, including:

- airport accessibility and available assistance
- boarding arrangements, for example, aerobridges or alternative assistance
- seating options, such as moveable armrests or aisle seats
- aircraft type and onboard facilities
- travelling with mobility aids.

Accessibility planners, airport maps and apps can help you plan your journey, including routes, facilities, parking, sensory maps and quiet spaces. A trial run may also help assess suitability.

Rare Voices Australia has co-designed a [Rare Disease Disability Toolkit](#) alongside people living with rare disease disability. The guide to [Navigating Air Travel with Rare Disease Disability](#) is an excellent resource for those travelling with a disability and the information in this section draws heavily from this resource. It contains useful information, checklists and fact sheets, some of which are highlighted in this guide.

Confirm your booking

After booking, confirm key details and request written confirmation if needed, including:

- requested assistance services
- flight details, check-in time and seat allocation
- onboard services and stopovers.

Notify your airline

Tell your airline about your needs as early as possible (ideally at least 48 hours before travel) so arrangements can be made. This is particularly important if travelling with mobility aids, medical equipment or assistance animals.

If travelling internationally, ask about support available at your destination.

At the airport

Getting around

Airports can be complex to navigate. Plan ahead and arrive early. Assistance may not be available before check-in, but airlines can usually assist from check-in through to boarding if notified in advance.

Airport maps, accessible parking, drop-off zones, apps and quiet rooms may help reduce stress, particularly for neurodivergent travellers.

Check-in and assistance

Airlines may offer priority check-in and can assist with kiosks, baggage and mobility aids. You can:

- request seating that meets your needs (fees may apply)
- ask for wheelchair assistance through the airport
- receive help boarding and disembarking.

Assistance may be limited after arrival, so consider travelling with a support person or carer if needed.

Security screening

All passengers must undergo security screening, but alternative methods may be used where appropriate to ensure respectful and dignified treatment.

- Inform screening officers if you need assistance.
- You may need supporting documentation for alternative screening.
- Communication tools, such as notification cards or boards, may be available.
- If you are separated from belongings during screening, you can request staff to supervise them.
- Assistive items may be retained where possible or screened separately.

Boarding, in-flight and arrival

With sufficient notice, you can receive assistance to the gate, onto the aircraft and into your seat. You may also be helped with hand luggage and transfers between flights.

Cabin crew can assist with tasks such as:

- moving around the cabin
- accessing meals and information
- using onboard equipment.

Cabin crew cannot assist with eating, toileting or medical care.

Mobility aids and equipment

If travelling with a wheelchair or mobility aid:

- check airline and [CASA guidance](#) before you travel
- take photos of your equipment before check-in
- report any damage immediately on arrival.

Assistance Animals

Australian airlines allow accredited assistance animals, such as guide and hearing dogs, to travel in the cabin with their handler. These animals must be appropriately trained, certified and well-behaved and passengers should notify the airline in advance. While airlines must accommodate assistance animals under disability laws, carriage is still subject to aviation safety requirements and animals that don't meet those requirements may be refused.

★ QUICK TIPS

- Notify the airline of your needs at booking AND reconfirm 48 hours before departure
- Arrive early — special assistance takes more time to coordinate
- Photograph your mobility equipment before checking it in
- Bring accreditation documents for assistance animals
- Ask for any refusal to be put in writing
- Contact the AHRC if you experience disability discrimination in air travel

SECTION 09

Key Contacts & Resources

For further information and to get in touch with any of the external organisations mentioned in this guide, the [ACOS Website](#) provides travellers with a comprehensive list of key contacts and resources.

Before you embark on your journey, consider bookmarking the contact information of the airlines, airports, consumer protection and support services that may be relevant to your trip.

For current information, use official Australian Government and airline resources.