

Hey Dennis,

Just a heads up for the rest of the troops, after several months of planning, I set off alone to Toronto Airport Terminal 1 Air Canada departures a few days ago for a three week trip to Thailand.

I had several hotels booked and paid for, with three flights in-country, aircraft seating and local activities also pre-booked and paid.

On arrival at departures area 5, I checked in at the self-serve kiosk, got my boarding card and tags for my bag. The place was packed with travellers from all walks of life. As I was attaching my tag, an elderly European man and his younger “daughter” in her 30’s asked me to help with inserting their passport into the kiosk. I helped and saw that it was a foreign passport that could not be processed at the kiosk and so directed them to go to the check-in counter for help. That took all of 90 seconds and my bags were 2 feet away....

On turning around, my main checked suitcase was still there but my black backpack was gone. Inside was my passport, \$1000 cash (unfortunately, the better option for Thailand travel), all travel documents, iPad, credit and debit cards, health documents, insurance documents, driver’s licence etc etc. Looking around, the old guy and daughter were nowhere to be seen and after a frantic search through the crowd it was clear that generic black backpacks were everywhere and the search was fruitless.

I was not allowed to board due to having no physical passport and it would have been pointless anyway having no access to cash/credit cards. I attended the police booth and also spoke to airport

“public safety” staff and asked them to check the video surveillance. After a 30 minute wait, they advised that “the camera was pointed the other way” and did not record that area – go figure, the busiest area of departures and no surveillance.

I waited around until the flight departure time just in case the bag was handed in but obviously no luck so I returned home. And so the nightmare began.....

The loss of the vacation was one thing but the financial hit and stress was entirely another. Despite me having photocopies of everything, cancelling and replacing all of the documents was and still is exhausting and costly. I had insurance coverage for some travel and missing items through my BMO credit card which I am grateful for but they require endless documents, receipts, itineraries and proof of everything before they consider anything including a physical copy of the police report (and the report filed with Toronto Airport itself). Many of the expenses I have just foregone due to the time and effort involved to try and prove the loss.

As an aside, the Peel police officer at the airport suggestion was that I just file a report on-line but that they don't take stolen passport reports and that they have to be reported directly to the Federal Passport section. I disagreed with that but arguing wasn't getting me anywhere. I reported the passport stolen over the phone the next day with the passport office but they knew nothing about how it would be placed on CPIC for example. I then contacted Peel Police records and was told they do not take missing passports but stolen have to be reported in person (surprise surprise) and that copies of any police reports could not be released until it had been reported as stolen. Thus, I will be off to Brampton from Barrie with all of my remaining documents to report the stolen passport and pay the requisite fee for the

updated report.

Please excuse the lengthy diatribe, but I would just like members to be aware of the circumstances of this situation and prepare accordingly. Despite being a frequent traveler, I have learned:

- Trust no one around you, however innocent they appear or how serious their predicament.
- Scumbags and vermin who prey on people are alive and well in society as we all know but now verified.
- Retired officers are not immune to any scams
- Mark any baggage you have with a highly noticeable marking to easily identify it quickly if it is taken
- Have copies of everything in a separate location and accessible in a secure on-line cloud location for example [Hint - LastPass is an excellent FREE Password Manager https://www.lastpass.com/](https://www.lastpass.com/)
- Have contact numbers in duplicate available for everything should you need to call them
- Let nothing out of your sight and keep it within arms reach
- Have some form of baggage/trip interruption/trip cancellation/medical/item insurance in place – never say never
- Take limited cash if you don't need immediate cash at your destination point
- Keep your receipts at home for everything you are taking with you of value (electronics etc...)
- If your passport is stolen and not just lost, passport office AND police must be notified.

Good travels to all and I hope the above provides members with some pointers in order to help avoid the issues I have encountered. A bit of pre-prep will make your whole life easier just in case.....

Take Care

Merry Christmas from the PPAO
Terry Hill, Communications Director