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TRAVEL SAVVY Cutting PDX noise

Oregonian, The (Portland, OR)
December 25, 2005
 Author: MONIQUE BALAS; Special to The Oregonian

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Cutting PDX noise

Have a say in ways to cut **noise** coming from airplanes using Portland International **Airport**.

The Port of Portland has two openings on the 15-member Citizen **Noise** Advisory Committee. The volunteer-run group is the Port's partner on aircraft **noise** issues and is an official citizen forum to address concerns about air traffic above neighborhoods in the metro area. To get a balanced representation, preference for these openings will be given to people who live in the Concordia and Wilkes neighborhoods, followed by Kenton, West Hills, Maywood Park and downtown Vancouver.

There's a monthly meeting and an annual retreat. Members also update their neighborhood associations or other community groups. Applications are due Jan. 6. Contact: Rachel Wray, 503-460-4073, rachel.wray@portofportland.com. Application forms are also available at www.portofportland.com.

Travel warnings

Traveling to Iraq, Nepal or Bolivia may sound adventure-filled, but maybe not what you have in mind. The U.S. State Department has issued travel warnings in these countries due to political unrest.

The department said U.S. citizens are most at risk in Iraq. Americans there are strongly encouraged to register with the embassy at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/IBRS>.

In Nepal, Maoist rebels are active. Nepalese protesters have been known to use violence in their anti-government demonstrations, and Americans are urged to stay out of the way. Keep a low profile.

In Bolivia, a public announcement was issued for the Dec. 18 national elections and will extend through Feb. 20. Americans traveling in the country should try to avoid roadblocks or public demonstrations. Keep an eye on the State Department Web site, www.travel.state.gov, for updates.

An A-plus site

A new Web site, BoardFirst.com, can help secure "A Group" boarding passes on Southwest Airlines for \$5 per pass.

The site can reserve up to eight passes. "A Group" pass-holders board first and thus can select the best seats and overhead storage locations. Southwest does not offer reserved seating and usually only offers 45 "A group" passes per flight, available only online 24 hours in advance.

Log on to BoardFirst.com up to 48 hours before your flight and enter your credit card and reservation information. The site will process boarding passes and search for Group A seating at exactly 24 hours before the flight's departure. At the 24-hour mark,

you can log on to Southwest's Web site top find out if you've been placed in Group A seating or find out if such a pass was unavailable. If the pass is confirmed, the site will charge the \$5 per pass fee.

FYI: The service works only if you've bought your ticket online and if you're not security-flagged, age-restricted or leaving in more than 48 hours.

BYO --Soda pop

Beginning in January, American Airlines' regional affiliate American Eagle will begin charging customers \$1 for a 12-ounce soda on flights into and out of Los Angeles. The fee may migrate to all American flights later.

American may also experiment with charging for snacks, pillows and blankets. Some travel experts are predicting the trend may carry over to "perks" like a window seat or an advanced seating assignment.

Travel Savvy: msbalas@comcast.net or c/o Destinations, The Oregonian, 1320 S.W. Broadway, Portland, OR 97201.

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