



Tired of Long TSA Airport security lines? Here is how to avoid them

## Description

**Learn how TSA Precheck, Clear Plus, and/or Global Entry can get you through the airport faster**

*"I'd like to fly. Then I wouldn't have to wait in airport security lines."  
JIM morris*



If you have been to U.S. airports recently, you have likely come across some ridiculously long TSA security lines. Along with my frequent travels, I volunteer weekly at my airport USO (United Services Organization), to serve our military service members. When I arrive at 8:00 pm, I often see massive lines with posted wait times up to 90 minutes. This is on a weekday too! It is easy to see the stress in the people in line. It inspired this post because it doesn't have to be this way and never is during my travels.

Recently, I had guests who had a mid-week late evening flight wait almost 40 minutes in the TSA Precheck line and only made their flight because it was delayed. There are many reports in the news of scores of people missing flights. Rescheduling is a nightmare, too, as most flights are completely sold out. It seems crazy and a waste of time to show up 3 hours before a domestic flight, but that is becoming the new reality. The stress is not worth it.

**Once past security, things have changed.**



Photo from Global Entry Website

Most airports now have so many great food, drink, and shopping options past security it is sad to miss out. Now that many personal services such as chair massage, pedicures, and live music are available again, making traveling more pleasurable, it is a shame to miss out. For travelers like us who have access to lounges through our travel credit cards, we want to maximize our time there, which makes it even more essential to get through quickly.

## What is the cause of all this



Photo from TSA PreCheck

What is causing these long airport security lines involves a multitude of factors. Staff shortage issues with the TSA, long check-in lines at the counters also due to low staffing, an increase in travelers now flying after two years of Covid, increased screening times due to Covid, and security threats.

Then we have all been behind the unprepared traveler, who has tons of jewelry on, liquids in their carry-



on, zippered boots on, etc. That becomes an extra minute or two for each of these people, which adds up very quickly. Predictions are that the number of travelers using U.S. airports in the next few months will surpass levels before the pandemic.

Heading overseas soon? Check out our [Packing for Success](#) page

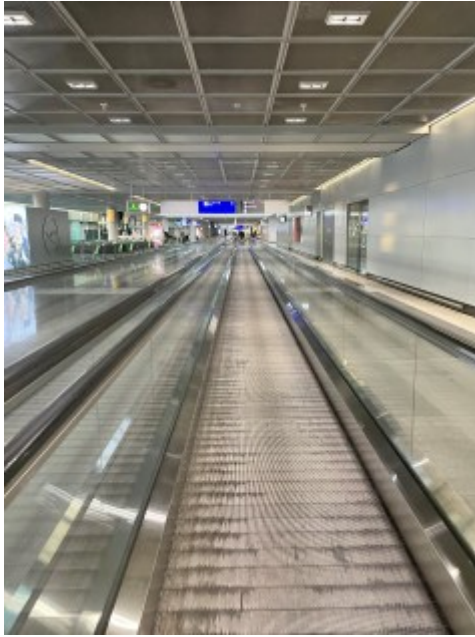
**It is so bad people can reserve spots online**



Many airports now allow you to pre-book a spot online for the TSA airport security line. You get a bar code and get to go to the front of the line. Since only frequent and local travelers will likely know about this, the tourists wait while others jump ahead. The Spot Saver program is free, but you have to wonder if that is only temporary. When the airports have to start using Disney ideas to expedite lines, you know you are in trouble.

I found this interesting from the TSA site: "it's intended for those who don't have access to any priority screening options, like TSA PreCheck and CLEAR." So more reasons to look into those programs.

**How to avoid those long lines**



In my case, and when we do our blog travels, the average wait time in the airport security line is less than three minutes at any airport I use in the U.S. You read that right, less than FIVE minutes. That is in the same airport that has 90 minutes of security lines. I can assure you I don't have friends in TSA, and what I do to expedite the process through security everyone can access.

What allows me to fly through security is that I have TSA PreCheck through Global Entry, and I have CLEAR Plus. Let's examine these options, their cost, and how it works.

Please note we have no relation or business affiliation with any of these programs.

## TSA PreCheck



Photo from TSA PreCheck website

The most significant perk of [TSA PreCheck](#) is access to a dedicated, expedited airport security line at most U.S. airports. The people that tend to be in these lines are more seasoned travelers, so they tend to have fewer issues getting through screenings. Also, only a tiny percentage of people get put through

the body scanner; it is not used as often in the Precheck area.

In addition, you don't have to remove liquids from your luggage, shoes, belt, light jacket, or laptop. That alone is a relief.

You may think this is expensive and cumbersome to get. Not at all. There are two ways to get [TSA PreCheck](#). The factor that decides which way to go is simple. Ask yourself this question, do I travel internationally? If you don't, get the [TSA PreCheck](#) directly. If you travel a couple of times a year internationally, apply for **Global Entry**, which comes by default with TSA PreCheck.

Suppose you have a travel credit card like Chase Sapphire Reserve, American Express Platinum, Capital One Venture Rewards, etc. In that case, they now offer account credit when you sign up for Global Entry or TSA PreCheck. The credit is usually up to \$100. You purchase it with the card with this offer, and they then credit you. The credit was there within 24 hours of the purchase when I used my Chase Sapphire Reserve.



Photo from TSA PreCheck website

## How to get TSA Precheck

### 1. Apply Online

Submit an online application in 5 minutes & schedule an appointment at any 380+ enrollment centers.

### 2. Enroll in person

A 10-min in-person appointment that includes fingerprinting for a background check

Membership is only \$85, renewals online go down to \$70, and children under 12 can join their parents at no cost. This membership is good for **FIVE** years. If you travel more than once a year, it is worth its weight in gold, as it is said.

With TSA Pre✓ you don't need to remove:



Learn more at [www.tsa.gov/precheck](http://www.tsa.gov/precheck)

Photo from TSA PreCheck website

## Good to know about TSA Precheck

- More than 200 airports and 81 airlines provide TSA PreCheck. [Click this link](#) to see which airports have it available.
- The [TSA offers a mobile app](#) called MyTSA, which provides passengers with 24/7 access to airport security information. It can also tell you what the lines are like at your airport. It also includes helpful tips for preparing for security, including a searchable database of what you can and cannot bring in your carry-on.
- In the early days of PreCheck, lines were rarely long. It is now such a popular program that it is no longer the case. The lines can get quite long, and I have seen 40-minute waits. Keep in mind if TSA PreCheck is 40 minutes, the regular lines are much longer!
- Pre-TSA lines are not needed at times due to the time of day. At first, I would panic because I did not sort out my liquids. But if you have TSA PreCheck, security has given me a card that lets the screener know I am PreCheck, so I don't have to remove my liquids, jackets, laptops, or shoes. I am unsure if this happens at each airport, but it has happened many times to me.

### USEFUL TIP



*Sometimes, your boarding pass does not have PreCheck written on it. If it is not on your boarding pass, you will NOT be able to use the line and be sent to the regular line, further delaying you. DO NOT leave the check-in counter without verifying it, I have, and it sucks. If you check in online, your boarding pass must have it on there. If not, call the airline or go to the check-in counter when you arrive at the airport to correct it.*

*Have your Prescheck number on you at all times, and if you tell the gate agent the number, they can fix your boarding pass right there. Most programs allow you to enter it into your ticketed reservation under Trusted Traveler Number. If you have a profile with the airline, it can be entered onto your profile, so you don't need to worry about it moving forward. But still, check before getting in the airport security line; mistakes happen. I have mine in phone contacts, so I easily pull it up.*

## Global Entry



Photo from Global Entry website

[Global Entry](#) is for people who travel outside the United States several times a year. Once accepted, it is a 5-year membership like TSA Precheck and requires an interview at the Global Entry Enrollment Center and fingerprinting. It is referred to as the Trusted Traveler Program. You need to be a low-risk traveler and agree to follow the rules. There is a rigorous background check done before you can get that interview.

This process is more involved than TSA PreCheck because waiting to get an appointment in some airports can be long. It is usually only done at airports with border control offices, which can be a hassle for those who live far from airports. If you happen to return from travel abroad, an office usually will interview you within the customs area. I have passed these many times and rarely see a line, which is a good option for many.

The two benefits of [Global Entry](#) are gaining expedited clearance upon arrival to the United States and getting TSA Precheck. At airports, program members proceed to Global Entry kiosks, present their machine-readable passports or U.S. permanent resident card, or an eye scan. The kiosk issues the traveler a transaction receipt with their image and directs them to baggage claim and exit.



## Recent experiences



Picture from Global Entry website

On our recent travels in May 2022, the lines were long and slow for NON-Global Entry people. We walked up to a Kiosk. In our case, it scanned our eyes, and we didn't need to scan our passports. We quickly received a slip to hand to the customs officer. The average time to get through is around 5 minutes. It is such a relief after a long international flight, to say the least.

Luggage tends to come out quicker on international flights, so we are on the road often within 30 minutes of landing at the airport we usually use. If you have a connection to make, you are much less likely to be missing it if it is tight.

## How to apply for Global Entry

1. Create a [Trusted Traveler Programs \(TTP\)](#) account. Regardless of your age, you must have a TTP account.
2. Log in to your TTP account and complete the application. A \$100 non-refundable fee is required with each completed application.
3. After accepting your completed application and fee, CBP will review your application. If your application is conditionally approved, your TTP account will instruct you to schedule an interview at a [Global Entry Enrollment Center](#). Each applicant must schedule a separate interview.
4. You must bring your valid passport(s) booklet and another form of identification, such as a driver's license or I.D. card, to the interview. You must present your machine-readable permanent resident card if you are a lawful permanent resident.



Picture from Global Entry website

A \$100 one-time fee with your Global Entry application must be paid at the time of application submission through the [Trusted Traveler Program \(TTP\) System](#). You can pay by credit card or through an electronic bank transfer.

As noted above, many travel credit cards offer to credit you for this. If you travel abroad, it is the best deal, as that \$100 gets you TSA PreCheck.

Please note the fee is non-refundable, even if an application is denied.

### Good to know about Global Entry

The interview is pretty serious but quick. They ask a few questions and detail the rules you must follow and the penalties when you don't.

There are no custom forms to complete anymore when reentering the United States. That does not mean you can be unaware of the limits of what you can bring back. Click here for the [United States Customs and Border Control Government website](#) for more information.

### CLEAR Plus



This is the best of all programs out there. Since I joined, I have NEVER waited in any airport security line. [Clear](#) Plus members have a separate area to be screened. You do not need to present any I.D. Your identity is verified at a Kiosk (I do the Eye Scan), and your boarding pass is scanned into the machine. A Clear Plus ambassador is there with you the whole time. Once “cleared,” they escort you to the TSA agent doing the security screening, bypassing everyone waiting in the regular line.

It is impressive—the program utilizes biometric authentication (fingerprint or eye scan). Once you have checked your bags, you can put your I.D. away! All you need is your boarding pass.



The usual rate for [Clear Plus membership](#) is \$189 **per year**. However, there are many ways to save and avoid paying the total retail price. Clear partners with both Delta and United offer special membership rates. We get it through United as part of their frequent flyer program. It also available with Delta. Top-tier frequent fliers on United (1K) and Delta (Diamond) get it for free. My rate this year, they just have a big price increase, was \$149. Ryan has the American Express Platinum Card, and his membership was free.

Some credit cards also offer you a significant discount: you’ll earn up to \$100 statement credit per calendar year when you use the card to purchase a [Clear membership](#). The program also has frequent

promotions such as three months free or extended renewal if you have referred someone. Membership is free if you are a top-tier Delta or United frequent flyer.

### Signing up for Clear is easy



Picture from Clear website

Start your easy, one-time enrollment online, [click here](#), then finish at any airport. Clear location – no appointment necessary; just bring a valid government-issued I.D. I signed up at the airport. I just walked up, and 5 minutes later, I was done. The agent is there to make the process quick and easy. I was able to use it right away so you can avoid your first long airport security lines. It is only good in the United States.

Clear is also expanded beyond airports and has additional perks. CLEAR's innovative identity technology powers faster, easier, and more secure experiences at hotels, stadiums, offices, and more. There are Clear lanes in many stadiums and arenas nationwide for faster entry. The [app](#) offers age verification with just a tap and virtual queuing.

The [Clear Plus program](#), in my view, is worth it, even if I travel only a couple of times a year. They offer family memberships with a substantial discount, and children under 18 traveling with their parents are free.

### Good to know about CLEAR

[Clear](#) lines are not usually open 24 hours a day at most airports. When there are very few flights, it is often closed from the late evening, starting at 11:00, and reopens at 3:30 am. Of course, that varies by airport. It is essential to check before you head out. [Click here for the link](#) with a list of airports and their hours.

Please note that you can be randomly pulled for I.D. screening and extra checks even with Clear. This occurs probably every 10th flight for me. It isn't a big deal since you are at the front of the line anyway.

A new perk is an Avis Preferred Plus membership. Clear members get complimentary Avis Preferred



Plus status. Avis Preferred Plus is the middle tier of the Avis rental loyalty program. Its perks include: a free, single-car class upgrade upon availability along with skipping the lines and heading straight to your car.

You would typically need to spend \$4,000 on qualifying Avis purchases or complete 10 rentals in a calendar year to qualify for Avis Preferred Plus.

## Final thoughts





Virgin Atlantic Airport Lounge, free entry provided by American Express Platinum card

If airports are causing you to stress and you are tired of long airport security lines, sign up for TSA PreCheck and Clear Plus to help expedite your travels. It is an easy and quick process that will make your travels much more relaxed. Enjoy what the airport has to offer inside security.

We are lucky to have free access to airport lounges at most airports through my Chase Sapphire Reserve card and Ryan's American Express Platinum. It is a good idea to check if your card has that available or provides a few free lounge passes a year. We get to the airport at least two hours before any flight and enjoy complimentary food and a free open bar. Larger lounges offer huge food spreads and areas to relax, work, or sleep. Many even have showers. Not standing in long security lines has its perks.

Don't have access to airport lounges? Sometimes we don't either, so we enjoy window shopping, checking out artwork, listening to live music, exploring the airport, or getting a snack.

I remember the days I dreaded heading to the airport and the stress I often experienced before getting on the plane. Now I am excited about my travels to the airport, and getting past airport security lines is seamless. If only it could extend to Europe. In the meantime, I will take what I can get here and appreciate it.

Safe and smooth travels to all.

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To empower you as a consumer, we suggest you read our [blog post](#) on the importance of travel



insurance and how to get the best coverage from top-rated companies for an affordable price.

### [MedjetAssist](#)

#### **Medical transport back home from anywhere in the world**

They are the premier global air medical transport. One caveat to travel insurance is that medical evacuation usually gets you to the closest facility to care for you. Medjet gets you back to the U.S. to the hospital of your choice once you are stable enough to fly. They cover COVID-related transport as well.

[Medjet](#) carries its own policies. These policies are only for transport and do not cover other aspects of travel insurance. They have individual trip policies starting at \$99 and annual policies for around \$300. Most of their policies limit the age to 74 and younger. Prices are not based on age below that.

To learn more about how Medical Evacuation membership with Medjet Assist works, check out our [blog post](#) for a more detailed review.

### [Expedia.com](#)

#### **Hotels, home rentals, BNBs, flights, and other transportation & tours**

[Expedia](#) is a US-based company whose mission is to power global travel for everyone and everywhere. Whether planning a family vacation, booking for business, or organizing the trip of a lifetime, they are a fantastic resource. Wanderers Compass focuses on independent travel, and using sites like [Expedia](#) makes that possible. Every aspect of travel you need, from airfare, accommodations, rental car, and cruises to activities to do at your destination, can be booked on [Expedia](#).

### [Booking.com](#)

#### **Hotels, Home rentals, BNBs, Flights, and other Transportation & Tours**

[Booking.com](#) connects millions of travelers to memorable experiences, various transportation options, and incredible places to stay – from homes to hotels and much more. It is one of the world's largest travel marketplaces for established brands and entrepreneurs of all sizes.

We always check Expedia and Booking.com to verify prices. At times, one is sold out of rooms while another at the same place has rooms. We also often find some European hotels, especially smaller ones, on Booking.com but not on Expedia. It could be they are a Europe-based company. Try both before booking accommodations.

### [Vacation Rental By Owner \(VRBO\)](#)

#### **Are you traveling with a family or having an extended stay at your destination?**

With over 2 million bookable vacation rentals, [VRBO](#) connects homeowners with families and vacationers looking for something more than a hotel for their trip. The [VRBO](#) community offers families

or groups various rental property types such as condos, cabins, lake rentals, beach houses, etc.

[VRBO](#) is now under the Expedia group's ownership, which many were worried about, but it hasn't panned out to be a concern. It is a massive network with access to all lodging forms should issues arise. Joelle has used VRBO for many years with her family and has had no problems with it.

### [Viator](#)

As the leading marketplace for travel experiences, [Viator](#) believes that making memories is what travel is all about. And with 300,000+ experiences to explore—everything from simple tours to extreme adventures (and all the niche, interesting stuff in between)—making memories that will last a lifetime has never been easier.

With industry-leading flexibility and last-minute availability, it's never too late to make any day extraordinary. This one site has it all and has experiences throughout the world. We use them often during our travels, especially for food tours. We especially take the time to read the reviews provided.

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We buy most of our travel books, accessories, and luggage from Amazon. We have ordered up to two days before travel and get what we need.

### [HYDAWAY](#)

This is not your ordinary drinkware company. The **HYDAWAY** difference is what their products do when you're not using them. Practical and portable, HYDAWAY doesn't take up unnecessary space in your already-packed life or pile up in landfills. We all know that trying to pack light while being environmentally conscious can be difficult. Having the right items can make a world of difference.

[HYDAWAY](#) provides that.

We have used their collapsible water bottle, carrying case for the water bottle, and collapsible insulated drink tumbler. They are all lightweight and durable. A conservation-focused product you can be proud to buy.

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## **PhotoAiD**

Do you feel like you are wasting time visiting an on-site photographer only to be embarrassed by the photo? Would you like control of the final product? Get the perfect VISA or passport photo online with PhotoAiD.

When traveling, you often need to apply for official documents such as a passport, ID, and different kinds of licenses or cards. Those applications require a picture that must meet specific conditions to be accepted, depending on the country. Now, it is possible to take this picture at home without the help of a professional photographer. PhotoAiD allows you to take the perfect biometric photo you approve without leaving home.

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