



A REASON FOR FLYING ON A PRIVATE CHARTER

News / Business aviation



by Cdr. Bud Slabbaert

One of the reasons why people prefer to fly on a private charter are the typical inconveniences of flying scheduled commercially. A good longtime friend of mine, Prissy, prefers to fly private. But, when her son is flying their Learjet and her daughter drives the Lamborghini, Prissy must fly scheduled. Prissy flew to Philadelphia and experienced that her lost luggage didn't arrive.

After realizing that her luggage remained absent from the carousel, she agitatedly walked through the terminal towards the baggage claim area with the determination of a Caterpillar bulldozer to flatten anything that comes in the way, yet, still sustaining her poise like a voluptuous model on the catwalk. She enjoyed the intent stares she expected from observers as the sound of her clomping heels caught their attention. Thinking they are admiring her for her sophistication, she keeps her head held high and thinks to herself: "Why doesn't Versace expose their clothing tags on the outside so these imbeciles can become aware how expensive my wardrobe is. But then again, why bother, from the looks of them, I imagine they wouldn't have the faintest idea,"

With full conviction she believes that the airport is responsible for her missing luggage.

She approaches the baggage claim desk that is unoccupied at the moment.

"Excuse me! Anyone here to help me? My luggage is lost!" Prissy frantically said and visually waited impatiently while drumming her finely manicured red nails on the counter.

Taking her time, a customer services representative comes out of the back office.

"And what is your problem today?" she asked unsympathetically.

"Are you addressing me?" Prissy said.

The representative rolled her eyes and continued: "Ma'am what is it that you need?"

"Well, if I am standing in front of the lost baggage desk, what is it that you think I need?" Prissy replied.

"I don't need the attitude ma'am, I just asked you a question." said the airport employee.

"Well, if you don't mind doing your job, I need you to locate my luggage; it is lost!"

"Have you filled out a Passenger Property Loss Claim form yet? No? Okay, then let's start by filling out a Passenger Property Loss Claim form."

The customer relations person pulled out a form from one of the shelves under the counter, grabbed a pen, and with an expression on her face of "who's next?" she looked at Prissy. She then raised her eyebrows to mimic a "well, anything coming yet?"

Prissy at that moment was distracted by young stylishly dressed woman moving by in a happy bouncy strut.

"Huh? Oh, Louis Vuitton" she vaguely said.

"Louise Phyton is that your name, ma'am?" asked the representative.

"No, my suitcases are Louis Vuitton," Prissy answered. "I have a Conquérant trolley and a Pegase suitcase, which are easy to identify from the other riff-raff luggage rolling along the baggage carousel! Understated elegance, I tell you."

"Ma'am, what's YOUR name?"

"Here is my flight ticket. Britches is the name, Mrs. Prissy Britches!"

"Britches, Mrs. P. Got that. Now we're getting somewhere. Where are your baggage claim tickets, ma'am?"

"Actually, I left those on the plane; you know, I use them for temporary bookmarks for the in-flight shopping catalog."



The airport rep glanced back at the form, hit the point of the pen quickly three times on the paper and gave Prissy a discouraging look. She saw that she could not expect anything more from Prissy.

"Never mind the claim tickets, I'll check on the computer" she said, "What type of cases again?"

"The Conquerant trolley with cutting-edge fabrications, an elegant one-arm handle and rollerblade-like wheels and the Pégase suitcase has slate textured Taiga leather, natural leather handles and red trim, of course."

"Of course, of course," the lost-and found employee sarcastically confirms "thus, soft case."

Anticipating Prissy's next descriptions, the lady quickly proceeds: "And what is the value?" as she scrolls with the mouse to the next line on the screen.

"Absolutely priceless! It was a gift from my third ex-husband."

"Go figure," the airport rep thought and said: "Ma'am, I need an actual dollar amount."

"Including contents?" Prissy asked.

"Yep! Including contents!" was the answer.

Prissy thought about it for a moment..... "Heavens, let's see...," as she starts pondering, then going into great detail proclaiming all her expensive designer clothes and luxurious items.

In the meantime, an irritated person waiting behind her sarcastically says, "Lady, I hate to bother you, but can you please hurry, my limo driver has been waiting for me outside for quite some time now."

Prissy observes the man's appearance from top to toe and thinks to herself, "when did a purple tie on a green shirt become mainstream fashion for men, he can't be serious?" And she responds:

"Well darling, that is what limo drivers are paid for to do, at least mine is, just be patient, I'm sure your driver will be waiting for you if you're important enough."

Then she continues to prolong her claim with the frustrated lady behind the desk.

"Okay, I've got something in the system here. The good news is that we have located your luggage and it is not lost. The bad news is that it is mislocated."

"What is that supposed to mean, mislocated? Where are my Louis Vuitton suitcases?"

"You see the IATA code for Philadelphia is PHI. Unfortunately..., someone.., and don't ask me

who, through an unintended oversight, of course, made a mistake and labeled them for RHI!" Prissy became extremely impatient.

"For crying out loud, where is my luggage?" she said, demanding a straightforward answer.

"RHI stands for Rhineland, Wisconsin!"

"What?" Prissy angrily flashed her teeth like a tiger in attack mode.

"Yes, Rhineland, Wisconsin. And unfortunately, at this time of the day, there is no way to get your luggage from Rhineland to Philadelphia. But..., we will deliver your cases to your hotel, tomorrow during the course of the day. Next, please ..."

And that is how it sometimes goes when not flying private charter.

About the author.



Cdr. Bud Slabbaert is the Chairman and Coordinator of the Caribbean Aviation Meetup, an annual results and solution oriented conference for stakeholders of 'airlift' in the Caribbean which will be held June 16-18 on St.Maarten. Mr. Slabbaert's background is accentuated by aviation business development, strategic communication, and journalism.

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