

How to Avoid Sticking Out Like an (American) Sore Thumb in Airports

by Elizabeth Leuenberger

- ❑ **No** short pants (male or female!) no matter how warm it may be outside.
- ❑ No sneakers or tennis shoes. Shoes may be flat and comfortable, but go for more of a stylish shoe or a loafer.
- ❑ Under **no circumstances** wear t-shirts, sweat suits, or trainers in public!!! Never wear sweat pants, and even avoid sweat shirts. This is particularly true if there's a sport or university logo on the clothing.
- ❑ Jeans are fine for ladies, but jeans should be stylish and should never be worn with tennis shoes and sweat shirt or t-shirt. If you really want to look more European (and to have aching feet by the end of your travel), wear stylish shoes with a heel, ladies!
- ❑ Guys can wear jeans with a collared shirt, but it's best to avoid them altogether.
- ❑ No baseball caps.
- ❑ Do not carry your pillow on the airplane. (Really, you don't see this anywhere else but in America.)
- ❑ Keep your voice down. No loud laughter, shouting across the airport to one another, etc. Americans are identifiable not only by our English but also by our infamous rowdiness. Calling out, "Hey, Bob!" is a surefire giveaway.
- ❑ By all means, no American flag anywhere: shirts, hats, jackets, stickers on luggage, etc. International travel is no time to flash your patriotism. Save that for home.
- ❑ Keep your passport tucked away out of sight and just pull it out when you need to show it. Even keep it face down -- other nationalities have the same color passports so you can avoid showing that it is a US passport.
- ❑ Don't carry around a water bottle or a coffee mug everywhere you go.
- ❑ Don't complain about smoking in public places or ask for no-smoking areas. If you don't see a no smoking area, just live with it.
- ❑ Remember, carrying around visibly English-language newspapers and magazines and novels is a giveaway, too. Keep your USA-Today stuffed in your carry-on, and pull it out just when you want to (discretely) read it.

My strongest advice is to watch what you wear. If you want to blend in, remember that Americans are much more casual than Europeans. Dress up more and be more conservative with colors than you would normally. Women can wear a business pants suit, or slacks and a blouse or blazer. Scarves are very European, but avoid colorful floral patterns. Men, avoid the tell-tale Dockers, khakis, and polo shirt or t-shirt. Wear grey slacks or corduroys instead and a casual sport jacket over your polo shirt or other casual collared shirt.

