

## BUSINESS TRAVELLER

## ROAD WARRIORS

## Life on the road 100 days a year

Baseball columnist Shi Davidi travels light while covering the Blue Jays throughout North America

ADAM STANLEY

As a late-winter ice storm blew through Toronto in mid-March, Shi Davidi went through the hassle many business travellers face, especially those who are on the go for a big portion of the year.

"Frozen roads, dodgy ride to airport, two hours on tarmac, three hours in air, one hour in traffic," he tweeted at the time, with a picture of his final destination attached.

But for Mr. Davidi, the photo was not of a cubicle, trade show or windowless boardroom. It was instead the Toronto Blue Jays' spring-training facility in sunny Florida.

As a baseball columnist for Rogers Sportsnet, and the Blue Jays beat reporter for the network, he's on the road more than 100 days in a year. And although it sounds like a grind, Mr. Davidi wouldn't have it any other way.

Especially when it comes to being able to cover exciting events such as the Blue Jays' run last year – the team made the playoffs for the first time since 1993, extending the 162-game regular season by 11 more.

"It's fun to cover a story that big and that people are so interested in," he says. "It wasn't the extension of the season that was a grind. It was more of a challenge logistically."

Since the Blue Jays' playoff competitors were the Texas Rangers and Kansas City Royals, Mr. Davidi sighs as he remembers the frantic pace in which he needed to arrange travel for games.

"They weren't the easiest places to get to, especially when you had to book last minute. You don't have a ton of options," he explains. "All the direct flights could be \$2,000, so you'd have to take connections or early-morning flights, and there are the inevitable delays."

But Mr. Davidi says it was a fun opportunity to be part of something the whole country was watching.

Mr. Davidi, who has been with Sportsnet since the 2011 season, spent 10 years full-time as a sports reporter with the Canadian Press after several years part-time with the wire service. He is also a journalism instructor at Centennial College.

Although he chuckles when asked how he manages to juggle both professional responsibilities – along with having a wife of 14 years and two boys, aged 8 and 5 – he admits he tries his best to cut out extra travelling where possible.

"The biggest challenge is that I have a family and being away from my kids so much is really hard," Mr. Davidi confirms. "I try to arrive day-of and leave night-of when possible, and I try to minimize my time on the road."



Baseball columnist Shi Davidi: 'You live at airports so much, I'm all about minimizing my time at them.' MARK BLINCH FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

But, that can make for some long travel days.

"When you travel this much, there are little things [that help] like getting free checked bags or priority upgrades. You live at airports so much, I'm all about minimizing my time at them," he continues. "I can make a carry-on work for a week and a half, and I try not to take anything that isn't really necessary."

Joe Brancatelli, a business travel expert and editor of JoeSentMe.com, a website dedicated to business travellers, says baseball writers have a big advantage over other frequent travellers – a precise schedule.

"There's not usually a schedule in February that says, 'Okay, this is where I'm going to be and when for the next 10 months.' Business travellers do not get that."

With 30 teams in Major League Baseball, there are only two Mr. Davidi hasn't yet visited, one of which will be checked off this year when the Blue Jays play the Colorado Rockies in late June. The other, the Los Angeles Dodgers, will have to wait for another year.

And although the Blue Jays made their season debut on the road on April 3 – so beginning another 162-game marathon – Mr. Davidi found some solace.

The team started its season in Tampa.

Special to The Globe and Mail

## FITNESS AND NUTRITION

## Staying healthy means planning ahead

PAUL ATTFIELD

Whether it was spending a week in Winnipeg for the 2015 Canadian Football League Grey Cup or following the Toronto Maple Leafs on a California road swing, Toronto-based TSN reporter Matthew Scianitti racked up more than 150 days on the road last year.

Since joining the sports broadcaster in 2013, the Toronto native has quickly come to learn the importance of finding time for exercise and good nutrition wherever he is to keep his mind sharp and allow him to feel comfortable in front of a camera.

"You have to pay attention to your body," he says. "The fact is, when you've got to fit into a suit and you've got to be on camera and you've got to look presentable, you have to take a lot more into consideration than just getting off the plane with a bag in hand."

On planes, particularly for short hops that don't serve meals, Mr. Scianitti ensures that when he gets to the airport he tracks down something nutritious to take on board with him, such as salads with lentils, chicken or some other form of protein,



TSN reporter Matthew Scianitti: 'You have to pay attention to your body.' TSN

along with fruit – bananas are his go-to snack – and vegetables. And in unfamiliar cities, he tracks down the nearest grocery store to make sure he has the nutrition he needs.

"If you're eating bagels and coffee all the time you're not going to be mentally aware," he says. "It's important to me that I've got the right fruits and vegetables and everything that can fuel me properly to make sure that I'm aware and ready for my job."

As someone who typically works out six days a week in some capacity, Mr. Scianitti also scouts out the city he's travelling

to ahead of time, and if workout facilities are lacking in the hotel where he is staying, he finds a nearby gym.

Planning ahead is important, according to Daniel Moylan, a strength and conditioning coach for Laylor Performance Systems in Toronto, which oversees the training of professional athletes such as Montreal Canadiens defenceman P.K. Subban, as well as business executives and anyone looking to improve their health.

"The biggest thing is when you're travelling, don't get caught up in the, 'I'm travelling ... so I can do whatever I want to do,'" he says, noting that indulging in a hotel's continental breakfast and a burger, fries and Coke lunch is probably not the best course of action.

When it comes to fitting in exercise, the main thing is to do something every day, Mr. Moylan advises. It's a guideline that Mr. Scianitti adheres to, even if it means getting up at 5:30 a.m. to fit in a workout. He advises anyone new to life on the road to experiment, and to find a routine that works for them, rather than obsessing over the details of how far they ran or how many repetitions they did.

## DEALS

## Travel companies are ready to make a deal

Even those in the sharing economy are vying for the business traveller's consideration

GUY DIXON

Teleconferencing hasn't changed business travel. What has changed is how far airlines and travel companies will bend over backwards to entice business travellers. It's something companies can use to their advantage in many ways.

## Specially negotiated deals

Business people sitting comfortably in first class and having access to special airport lounges are only the tip of the iceberg. The real perks take place in meetings held far from the airport.

These are where an airline representative sits down with a travel consultant such as Vicky Zaltsman, executive president of Toronto-based YYZ Travel Group and one of her frequent-flying clients to negotiate special deals.

For instance, Air Canada gives special treatment to companies spending \$300,000 or more annually on travel with the airline, including carriers in the Star Alliance to which it belongs, Ms. Zaltsman said. WestJet and numerous other airlines, and other multi-airline alliances, offer similar special deals for frequent-flying corporate travellers.

"It's a three-way communication," Ms. Zaltsman said. The airline, the travel consultant and the corporate client will meet annually, at a minimum, to dis-

cuss discounts. Flights between the United States and Canada, for instance, are often discounted up to 10 per cent, and international flights even more, Ms. Zaltsman said. "And if it's business class, they get even greater discounts because they [the airlines] would like to push business class."

Smaller businesses with tighter travel budgets typically won't have this level of direct negotiation, but they can use corporate rewards programs, in which companies get discounts whenever their spending hits certain tiers. The greater the spending, the larger the discount.

## Buying in bulk

Another option are corporate flight passes, allowing companies to buy tickets in bulk. They are similar to a bus pass allowing a specified number of one-way trips, and there are different passes for short-haul and long-haul flights, local and international distances, and for the level of service (from regular coach to business class).

A pass could be designated for 10 trips between Toronto and Montreal, say, or for six trips between Western Canadian cities and Asia. The trick is deciding when to use the pass and when to pay the fare.

If the airline is having a seat sale, it may be better to save the pass for trips when fares are high-



YYZ Travel Group's Vicky Zaltsman negotiates special deals for frequent-flying corporate travellers. KEVIN VAN PAASSEN FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

er. It depends on how much the pass breaks down in terms of the cost of each individual trip.

"What we are finding this year, in particular, is that more pass purchases are happening. That seems to be a bit of a trend, that buying in bulk has better value for most corporations," said Sherry Saunders, senior vice-president and general manager of Canada for the travel booking company Carlson Wagonlit Travel in Toronto.

## The sharing economy

Just as airlines, along with hotel chains and car-rental companies, are offering discounts and business perks, so are sharing-economy companies such as Uber and Airbnb.

"We are continuing to watch

that space closely," Ms. Saunders said. These companies are increasingly entering the business-travel market, but she added that companies have to answer whether "this is the right fit for you as a company."

Using Uber could mean not taking advantage of larger corporate deals that rental-car companies may offer. Or using Airbnb could undermine hotel deals.

"There are a number of things that corporations would really have to consider: Does this work in your travel culture to incorporate something like Airbnb in your corporate program? And then, what impact does that have on watering down the spend that you could give to a traditional hotel supplier, who is prepared to give you a discount?" Ms. Saun-

ders said.

"We've done some of our own studies that would suggest that Airbnb can be less expensive. But that's only one component that a corporation needs to consider," she said.

## Travel policies

For all the deals and overtures from travel companies and airlines, businesses are finding that travel savings are mainly coming from within, from changing the habits of their own employees. It can be difficult. Tightening travel budgets and scrutinizing expenses only go so far.

Negotiated travel discounts have little effect if employees are still booking their own travel, said Ms. Zaltsman at YYZ Travel Group. And yet, regular business travellers have their idiosyncrasies. These aren't just about comfort. They are about doing their job more effectively on the road.

"Getting a deal is the easier part of managing your program. The part that corporations are now spending much more of their time on is managing behaviour," Ms. Saunders at Carlson Wagonlit said.

A different approach rather than mandating that employees use a preferred travel company is to open communication between all parties, to try to make sure employees' needs are met by the preferred company.

**BUSINESS TRAVELLER**

**SLEEP**

# Power through jet lag

Though it is inevitable for business people travelling through time zones, a few tricks can minimize its effects

**CHRIS ATCHISON**

If you have ever travelled for business, this scene is probably familiar: Your overnight transatlantic flight is about an hour from its destination and you realize you have slept for a grand total of one hour.

Adrenalin might power you through that first day of meetings, but travel-related insomnia is taking its toll as you stare down a full slate of important meetings in the day ahead. You're tired, your body is in a state of confusion – in short, you are jet lagged.

The good news: You are not alone. Virtually every international business traveller experiences jet lag in some form or another.

And as Brian Murray, a neurologist and sleep specialist at Toronto's Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre explains, it is completely unavoidable. That is because jet lag is caused when the 24-hour molecular cycle that regulates every cell in our bodies – commonly known as the circadian rhythm – is thrown out of sync.

"If you fly Toronto to Paris, it will be six days until you're fully trained to the new time zone in a perfect scenario, but most of us function with less than perfect adaptation," Dr. Murray notes.

Indeed, most business travellers simply lack the time needed for proper time zone adaptation.

Allowing jet lag to take control, no matter how debilitating its short-term effects, is simply not an option for business leaders. Just ask Shamira Jaffer.

The CEO of Mississauga-based automated vending machine manufacturer Signifi Solutions Inc., travels at least once a month to visit clients around the world and has mastered the art of adjusting to different time zones. But not without her fair share of nightmare jet-lag experiences.

"On one trip I flew to Dubai via London on a red-eye flight and just crashed in my room when I got there," she recalls. "I basically had to postpone everything, including meetings, by one day because I just wasn't 100 per cent. I've learned a lot of lessons from that."

Since then, Ms. Jaffer has developed a jet lag-mitigating routine.

First, she tries to avoid those dreaded red-eye flights that force travellers to sacrifice most or all of a night's sleep. "I try to fly where I leave in the morning and get to my destination in the evening so I can get work done on the plane," she explains. "Then it's close to dinner time when I land and it's time for bed."

In fact, Edmonton-based sleep disorder specialist Atul Khullar advises business travellers to start acclimatizing to their destination time zone the minute they board a flight. "You want to live in that time zone, including sleeping when it would be night there," he advises.

But travellers beware. While many frequent fliers use sleep medication to get a full night's sleep, Dr. Khullar cautions that stronger sedatives carry a hangover effect that can sometimes exacerbate jet-lag symptoms. If necessary, he recommends lighter options, such as the sleep-regulating hormone melatonin.

Ms. Jaffer avoids sleep aids altogether, instead preferring to hit the gym on travel days to help keep her body in sync, while also minimizing the amount of food

and alcohol she consumes while in the air.

It turns out that saying "No thanks" to that extra glass of Cabernet is a good idea.

Alcohol can be a major factor in prolonging jet lag, according to Dr. Khullar. His simple rule: Keep the alcohol at a minimum when travelling.

And when you land, don't head to your hotel, pull the curtains and try to sleep off the jet lag. In fact, Dr. Murray recommends doing the opposite.

"I tell people to get out into bright light in the early morning and exercise," he says, adding that a reasonable amount of caffeine in the morning can also help business travellers function and reset their body clocks faster.

But what happens when, during a make-or-break business meeting, jet lag overcomes even the hardest traveller? Simple, says Dr. Murray. Stand up and walk around to avoid drowsiness, remain alert and even demonstrate engagement by delivering ideas or a presentation while on the move.

*Special to The Globe and Mail*

**TIPS TO BEAT JET LAG**

Brian Murray, a neurologist and sleep specialist at Toronto's Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, offers his tips for overcoming jet lag and maximizing productivity on your next business trip.

**Arrive early:** While not always practical, Dr. Murray advises business travellers to arrive at their destination a day or two in advance to help adjust to the new time zone and establish a new sleep-wake cycle.

**Enjoy the sunshine:** Light is an essential factor in helping to reset our circadian rhythms. Spend as much time outdoors absorbing sunlight as possible to help adjust to a new time zone.

**Get moving:** Starting each day with your preferred workout routine can help ease common jet-lag side effects such as confusion, while helping to boost alertness.

*Chris Atchison*

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# TAKING FLIGHT

Travellers share in the discovery of Premium Economy Class perks



Michael Bociurkiw, an expert in humanitarian issues, who recently flew Premium Economy Class with Air Canada, said, "I was surprised by how much it offered." It met his goal which is to enjoy the journey. AMBER BRACKEN

North American travellers seeking an elevated flight experience now have another option available. Filling the gap between economy and business class is premium economy, offering a full slate of attractive perks.

For Michael Bociurkiw, a speaker, writer and humanitarian based in Surrey, B.C., his time spent flying is a welcome opportunity to disconnect. "I put away all my electronic devices and really try to take in everything travel offers," he says. "My goal is to enjoy the journey."

Mr. Bociurkiw's travels have taken him around the world on various collaborations with international organizations like the World Health Organization

and UNICEF, as well as for his site, mysavvytraveller.com. Each month, he takes at least two trips, which has helped him earn Attitude Elite 75K status with Air Canada. For a recent flight from Toronto to Munich, he enjoyed the airline's new Premium Economy Class.

"I was surprised by how much it offered," Mr. Bociurkiw says. "It's really good value and doesn't cost much more than Economy. I like that I have another option for upgrading."

He was impressed by the onboard experience, citing the separate cabin, attentive staff, hot towel service and good food and beverage options available. Many passengers are pleased to discover that meals are similar to those

served in Business, replete with elegant china, glassware and linen napkins.

And Mr. Bociurkiw is also pleased with the in-flight entertainment system featuring a larger screen with higher resolution than what's offered in economy. "I have a weakness for interactive maps and it has some cool ones with great graphics," he says.

He's also well equipped when flying, on the ready with Bose noise-cancelling headphones and his vintage-leather toiletries case stocked with moisturizer, lip balm and facial spray – even though Premium Economy passengers do receive an amenities kit as well.

On one particular flight, with a TV interview scheduled shortly after landing, Mr. Bociurkiw was worried about being tired. That wasn't a problem, though. He arrived at his destination feeling refreshed, thanks to the comfortable reclining seat and the quiet cabin in Premium Economy. "I really do love flying even when it's for business. I think Air Canada offers something unique in Premium Economy."

For Rabbi Mendy Feigelstock, his work for a kosher certification agency takes him from his Vancouver home to international destinations, especially Asia, to visit food manufacturers. In a year, he typically takes more than 60 flights, clocking an average of 120,000 miles annually to earn him Super Elite 100K status on Air Canada.

The father of five children actually appreciates his time spent in the air.



Premium Economy Class, a new category of preferred seating in between Economy and Business Class, offers comfort and attention: wider seats with plush headrests, lots of legroom, toiletries and an amenities kit, plus meals ordered off the menu served with china, glassware and linen napkins.

## TRAVEL SMART

### Six tips for boosting your flying experience

1. Skip the alcohol and stick with water. Alcohol leaves you feeling dehydrated.
2. Set your watch and electronic devices to the local time where you're headed. Sleep and eat accordingly.
3. Beat jet lag by taking a nap for one or two hours maximum when you arrive at your destination. Then get outside, take in some sunshine and go for a walk.
4. Be organized. Have at hand all the things you would need mid-flight. For example, keep your credit card in your pocket and your toiletries in the seat-back pocket in front of you.
5. Wear slip-on shoes only. They make more sense for getting through security and for flying.
6. Consider using melatonin or a tablet of Graval to help boost your chances of good-quality sleep.

# From the ground up

A conversation with Ben Smith on how Air Canada became the only North American airline offering Premium Economy to its passengers

When Air Canada announced the introduction of its new Premium Economy Class on international flights, it signalled an all-out initiative at the airline. And it involved the orchestration of hundreds of moving pieces that needed to come together to create a product that worked for Air Canada's customers.

Ben Smith, President, Passenger Airlines, was one of those leading the charge to get this initiative off the ground – literally.

Mr. Smith shares some highlights of the journey, from how the airline set out to carve out its own niche for Premium Economy travel to the debate over cloth-versus-leather seats.

### What sparked the creation of a Premium Economy Class at Air Canada?

International Business Class has gotten much more luxurious and the amenities have gotten a lot better. And there's still a strong demand for something in between regular Economy and what's evolved into a much stronger Business Class, both from a price point and a product perspective.

That's how Premium Economy evolved. It's very similar to 30 or 40 years ago, when First Class started to get very luxurious, and Business Class was created. There was a need for something at that [mid] level.

What we're seeing is an evolution, where the names might be different, but what looks like Business Class today is very similar to what you would've seen in First Class maybe 20, 30 years ago. And what is called Premium Economy today is very similar to what Business Class looked like years ago.

### Can you talk about the process of introducing Premium Economy?

We didn't want to have a segregated product. If we were going to do it, we were going to do it fleetwide. That's a big decision, so we studied the matter for many years and looked at whether we would have critical mass, demand and a business opportunity to be able to do this across our network.

With only one of our competitors offering it, we thought this might be too big of a risk to take. Then, as more international carriers started to offer Premium Economy and we had the necessary customer base, we realized it was starting to become much more of a good opportunity.

The easiest way to introduce it was with a new airplane because you can order the airplane with that cabin already configured. When our first 787s were being finalized, we decided we would introduce it around that time.

It was a lot of infrastructure amendments that had to come through to get this product ready, and that's been happening over the last year and a half, so we will have close to 85 per cent of our international fleet complete later this year.

### Other carriers offer their version of Premium Economy. What makes Air Canada's different?

Depending on the airline, there are different types of Premium Economy. But you can bunch them into two camps. There's our Premium Economy, where you have width and pitch improvement over Economy, plus an improved meal and ground experience and a separate cabin. Some airlines are basically offering what we call preferred seats, which is just more legroom.

We wanted to make sure we have best-in-class from a Business perspective, from a Premium Economy perspective, from a wide-plus perspective, and from an Economy perspective – so that we are competitive in all of those four seating categories.

### How has the Canadian market responded?

The take-up has been better than expected and repeat business is excellent. We're actually saying now that we have the opportunity, perhaps in a few years, to consider even enlarging the Premium Economy cabin. Right now, the aircraft, [depending on the type], are configured with 21 and 24 seats in Premium Economy.

### What are customers saying about their experience?

What is the most important question to be answered is this: Does the product meet or exceed expectations? And I'd say eight or nine times out of 10, customers are saying Premium Economy exceeds their expectations. That is music to my ears.

The worse thing anyone who is responsible for a business wants to hear is that you haven't met customers' expectations and you've let them down. We are not hearing that.

### What stands out about Air Canada's Premium Economy?

One is its exclusivity in terms of size, which takes away a lot in terms of noise and the stress of flying. The overall comfort is worth it if you are used to going, say, from Toronto to Shanghai or to Beijing – a 13-hour flight in Economy – and Business Class may have been too

expensive. And then when customers actually see the amount of improved amenities and comfort they get for the price, the value more than compensates for what they actually receive.

### There are so many components that come together to create a positive customer experience – for example, a comfortable seat. What goes into that?

You can break it down into three parts. The most complex is the certification of the seat. Airplanes are heavily engineered; they have to be certified before they are able to fly. From a safety perspective, a seat must withstand turbulence, takeoff, landing, wear and tear.

When you're designing a piece of furniture for your house, you can pretty much do whatever you want. When you're designing a seat for an airplane, there are many different challenges.

Number 2 is what is realistic from a business perspective. Everyone wants to lie down completely flat in their own seats, but are you going to be able to sell seats, day in and day out? There's a practicality to how much space you can take up in the cabin.

The third step is creating something unique. Our seats have cushion support that is superior to what else [out there] is available – something the average traveller may not notice, but somebody who travels a lot will. Our seats are covered with mostly cloth and a bit of leather. On longer flights, cloth actually breathes better. If the cabin is cold or if it gets hot, cloth is much more comfortable.

It took about a year to decide on specifics and to finalize a Premium Economy seat. Though we could have bought a basic seat off the rack, we wanted our seats to be customized.

### How do you ensure you've created the right one?

It's not the first time we've designed a seat, so we've got a pretty rigorous process in place. There are great facilities for sampling and testing. We have our staff sleep [on the seats] overnight. There's simulation using body weight going up and down on the seats thousands of times to see how long it will take before cushions will need to be replaced.

"I really try to relax and enjoy the quiet," he says. "I try not to work too much. Instead, I like to watch documentaries and learn something on my flight."

On a trip from Vancouver to Seoul, for example, Rabbi Feigelstock was able to stretch out in Premium Economy. "There's more legroom [than in Economy]," he says, "and I can recline enough to get comfortable and fall asleep."

Getting enough rest is key for frequent travellers like Rabbi Feigelstock, who feels that he has mastered that by going through bedtime rituals before his flight. As an Air Canada Altitude Super Elite 100K status holder, he can visit any Maple Leaf Lounge where he can take a shower and brush his teeth to get ready to sleep.

And before his day of meetings starts, he will exercise at his hotel or book some time for sightseeing. "I've found that it's important to slow down a bit and really enjoy the journey."

Meanwhile, Deb Corbeil and Dave Bouskill have turned their passion for travel into a full-time profession for the last eight years. They're the couple behind the popular blog ThePlanetD.com and are sought-after brand ambassadors and speakers who tell their story about pulling the plug on their careers in Canadian television and film production to seek adventure in travel.

And they've found it. The twosome, temporarily based in Woodstock, Ont., have visited more than 100 countries in seven continents, spending three weeks each month travelling. On a recent trip to Dubai, they had a chance to try Air Canada Premium Economy Class.

"I've flown premium economy on other airlines, but it was not as good," says Ms. Corbeil. "The Air Canada version felt very luxurious with lots of legroom, a chance to order meals off a menu and comfy blankets and pillows, too. I was really impressed. It has a pod-like feel that I'd be willing to pay 35 per cent more than for Economy."

Mr. Bouskill agrees: "The service was very good. The flight attendants came around often to check in on passengers and to offer drinks – much like Business Class. We're impressed!"



Ben Smith, President, Passenger Airlines, Air Canada

The lighting, ratio of washrooms, carpet, noise suppression, seat pitch – all these little details are packaged together in a cabin. We hope that a customer will pick up on one or two of them, though there are 300 or 400 there.

### What is an example of how an aspect of Premium Economy was shaped by customer feedback?

We got a lot of feedback about unnecessary stress at the boarding gate. Not all customers were listening to announcements as to when they should board. It was very chaotic at the boarding.

Many U.S. carriers had introduced zonal boarding. We were a little reluctant about adopting it because we didn't see it used anywhere else in the world. But we thought we'd test it. It was a big success. We have rolled it out across our entire system.

We want all our customers to have a very enjoyable journey with us. That's the goal. We're constantly tweaking and evolving our Premium Economy product because it's very new for us. We want to be as good as we can be. A satisfied customer will come back, knowing it's well worth the money.

I truly believe Air Canada has the best Premium Economy Class of any airline in North America.

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