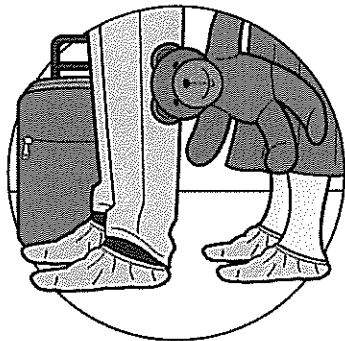


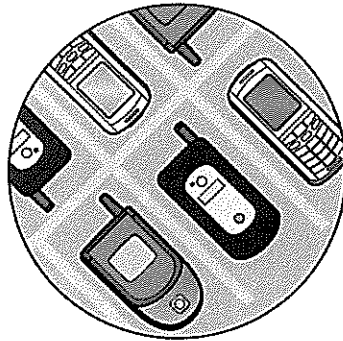


Don't Wing It

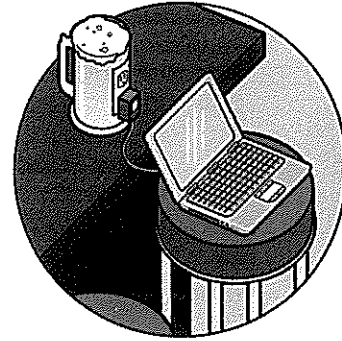
If you want to beat the Thanksgiving rush, the busiest travel time of the year, you'd better get to the airport pronto. Though projected figures aren't yet in for 2006, O'Hare and Midway saw an estimated 1.8 million passengers last Thanksgiving. Couple that with the recent news that O'Hare reclaimed the title of busiest U.S. airport, and you've got the makings of a holiday headache. But get to know the airports' new ins and outs now, and you'll navigate like a pro. by Jennifer Wehunt



FOOTY CALL It's official: Since August you're now required to remove your shoes at security. To ease the chill of that cold tile floor, both airports offer disposable footies (think shower caps for your feet) for the short X-ray shuffle. Chicago-based Howard Medical Company supplies around 2,000 pairs a day to Midway and 3,900 to O'Hare.



PICKING UP PASSENGERS? Don't play the circle game while Great-Aunt Gertie moseys through baggage claim; park it instead in a newly opened cell-phone lot while you wait for your arrival to call. Midway offers 90 short-term, free parking spots; O'Hare has 150.



PLUG IN, TUNE OUT Using laptops is about to get easier. Both airports are installing new "Recharge and Relax" hubs, where you can juice up at nifty laptop stations. Although outlets are available, look for six new stations at O'Hare and two at Midway by the holidays, plus an additional four at Midway and 21 at O'Hare by January 2007.



Wondering how much time to allow to make your flight? Find estimated wait times for security checkpoints at O'Hare and Midway, organized by day of the week and hour of the day, at waittime.tsa.dhs.gov. **A TIP:** At O'Hare, ticketed passengers are allowed to go through any security lane, no matter which terminal they're flying out of, except for Terminal 5.

What else is new?

- 1 If you've breezed through O'Hare's security with time to spare, spend a few minutes at Terminal 3's new **Accenture Interactive Network**. The 10-by-7-foot touchscreen, located at the intersection of the H and K concourses, is the first of its kind in the country, and gives passengers hands-on access to weather, sports scores, and news.
- 2 Want to drop off your car while you're away without dropping an arm and a leg for parking? O'Hare's **Economy Lot F** has reopened for the first time since the terrorist attacks on September 11th; at \$9 a day, it's O'Hare's cheapest daily option.
- 3 Put off holiday shopping until the last minute? Soon travelers will be able to browse **six new upscale boutiques**, from crafts at Hoypoloi to sunglasses at Oakley. The bad news: The newly awarded contracts don't go into effect until early 2007, so this season's procrastinators are out of luck.
- 4 Need a break? Grab a patch of visual serenity through scenery: O'Hare recently unveiled its first **"green roof,"** a 3,860-square foot eco-friendly plot atop the Fire Department's Rescue Building No. 3, visible from the Airport Transport System. Midway's first green roof is in the design stage.

ILLUSTRATIONS: COLIN HAYES

YOU SHOULD KNOW

One byproduct of new carryon regulations: more travelers opting to check bags. TSA reported an approximately 20 percent increase from July to August in the number of checked bags at Chicago airports—which can also mean longer waits at baggage claim, so plan accordingly. Check tsa.gov for updates. Though their standings vary from month to month, O'Hare and Midway both tend to fall toward the bottom of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics on-time departures list. Check bts.gov for a current ranking.