

[Home](#) » [Articles](#) » [Travel](#) » [Onward Travel Extortion](#)



[Onward Travel Extortion](#)



By [Roger Keays](#), 24 January 2009

When I left for Singapore in December I gained some unfortunate insight into the nature of the airline business. I was checking in for my flight was asked about my itinerary. Since the assistant was having a bad hair day and I was traveling without a return ticket she insisted that I had to buy a return flight before I was allowed to board, citing that proof of onward travel was required to enter Singapore.

Puuuuurlease!! *Singapore*?! A laissez-faire democracy covering 650 square km that issues 90 day tourist visas on arrival? I mean, the country is so small you could crawl out on your hands and knees if you had to. No. Nobody in Singapore cares, least of all the immigration officers processing queues and queues of people. BUT, the airlines care because the sooner they get your money the sooner they can put it to work.

I can't see any other explanation. Cashflow is hugely important to businesses, so if you can extract 1000 bucks out of all your customers a year in advance (or even a month), why wouldn't you? With thousands of people flying every day that's going to add up pretty quickly. I'd do it if I was an airline, but as it happens I'm just a passenger.

So what do you do if this happens to you? Well, the terms and conditions of my flight only contain a fairly lame clause stating 'Some countries may require proof of onward travel'. That's it. Nothing about refusal of service. I don't know, but I reckon if they're going to bullshit you, just bullshit them back. Get a quote on a return flight printed from your travel agent, or if you're really worried, actually book a return flight but make sure it is fully refundable.

In my case, I was able to board because my first flight was domestic to Darwin; the conflict was delaying other passengers; and I said I'd buy a return flight in Darwin. Funnily enough no one in Darwin seemed to think that was necessary.

Oh. BTW.. I've blogged about debt collectors a bit before (did I mention I was sent a debt recovery notice for *\$6?*). Well I had my credit file sent to me, and surprise, surprise... none of those horrendous debts that I defaulted on had been recorded. Hooray for Appeal to Fear tactics.

About Roger Keays



Roger Keays is an artist, an engineer, and a student of life. Since he left Australia in 2009, he has been living as a digital nomad in over 40 different countries around the world. Roger is addicted to surfing. His other interests are music, psychology, languages, and finding good food.