

Brussels airport

Ladies and gentlemen,

I don't know if you have ever been to Brussels. I have only been there twice, and both times I found it a very nice city. But trying to get to my flight at Brussels airport was quite an adventure.

First, there is your arrival at the airport. If you arrive at Brussels airport by bus, you get the impression that the whole airport is a gigantic parking place. The bus drops you off among a lot of parked cars. You have no idea where to go, there are no signs. So you just follow the other travelers to a small, revolving, glass door, that looks like the entrance to a rather shabby, second-rate office building.

Inside is a small hall with a lift and an escalator. Then you go up – two floors.

And now comes the second part, check-in. You step out into an enormous, cavernous departure hall with thousands of people and hundreds of check-in counters and absolutely no indication where your airline is.

You wander around at random up and down the isles, weaving in and out of long queues of people, with their children and their dogs and their luggage, searching desperately for a familiar sign.

EVERYBODY flies out of Brussels There are airlines that you have never heard of – and they are going to countries that you have never heard of! Ukraine International Airlines. WizzAir. SkyEurope. Air Polonia. Air Baltic, and heaven knows who else.

You finally find your airline and check in. And then comes the third part, getting to your plane. You start walking. First you go down two floors – then you walk and you walk and you walk and you walk – then you go up two floors – and you walk and walk and walk... By this time, you are convinced that your airline has decided to save fuel by making you walk halfway to Athens, and your luggage gets heavier and heavier, and you curse your idea of buying those Belgian chocolates for your boyfriend.

But fortunately, the thoughtful airport authorities have looked after your needs on your trip. They have arranged for conveniently placed cafés and bars, where you can stop for a cup of coffee. There are hotspots where you can check your e-mail, and write to your family to tell them that you won't be coming because you have gotten lost in the airport. There is even a shoe store, where you can buy a new pair of hiking boots to replace the shoes that you have worn out trying to get to your plane.

Thank you.

(425 words)