

BANDERA GUN CLUB
HOME OF WORLD AND STATE
SKEET CHAMPIONS
Bandera, Texas

TOAST TROOPS
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▶ A solid, airline-approved gun case is a must if you'll be flying with your shotgun. Purchase TSA-approved locks and carry an extra!

TRAVELING With Firearms

Whether you're flying or driving to your shooting destination, following these tips can ensure your shotgun gets there safely.

BY SHERRY KERR

You've invested a month's salary in your dream shotgun with the perfect balance and feel, accessorized it with chokes and sub-gauge tubes, had the stock perfectly fitted and the trigger tweaked just the way you like it. You've packed it in your custom protective case, and you're ready for the big shoot. The last thing you want to do now is get it all stolen.

With many of our members traveling each year to regional and zone shoots, World Skeet Championships, National Sporting Clays Championship, and even to international events, the security of shotguns and equipment must be of utmost concern to shooters. Whether traveling by automobile or airplane, shooters encounter many people along the way who might wish harm to expensive firearms or be happy to take them off their hands.

If leaving the house with a firearm is in your plans, even for the day, you can benefit from the advice of our insurance part-

ner, Sportsman's Insurance Agency, Inc. (SIAI). We asked SIAI about precautions to help keep your valuable firearms and other equipment safe during your travels.

According to SIAI, almost

is offered during the entire event, and guns are fully insured while they are there.

Regardless of where you are, SIAI says thieves who prey on the owners of expensive shotguns work in teams



▲ Nearly all gun thefts occur from vehicles. Never leave your gun in an unattended car!

all gun thefts occur from vehicles. They tell us they rarely get a claim for a gun theft from a gun club, private home or hotel room. That means theft of your gun is usually preventable!

The three most important and basic pieces of advice to safeguard your firearms are:

- ▶ Never leave a firearm in an unattended vehicle, whether on or off the club property.
- ▶ Make sure your gun insurance is up-to-date — premiums paid and all items listed. Remember to update your policy if you have new equipment. It won't keep your guns from being stolen, but it will help you replace them if it happens.
- ▶ If you come to the World Skeet Championships or National Sporting Clays Championship at the National Shooting Complex, use our gun check service. It

and observe subtle indicators that a gun is in a vehicle. Decals and stickers are a giveaway that guns might be in the vehicle, as are shooting caps, ammo boxes, shooting vests, cleaning equipment and other shooting-related items inside the vehicle that can be seen through the windows.

We all see the hints: Shooters leave the club, stop by a restaurant for dinner with their squad mates, and mill about the parking lot in their shooting clothes. We recognize them as shooters, and

so do thieves. Looking like a shooter may be unavoidable, but leaving firearms in the vehicle is not. Here are some other common-sense reminders to help keep your firearms safe, whether you're traveling to a faraway city or between your club and home:

- ▶ Do not decorate your gun cases or vehicles with shooting or firearms-related stickers or decals.
- ▶ Do not leave guns or gun cases in a vehicle where they can be seen through a window. If you must leave them unattended, cover or

▼ The name of the game when flying with firearms is "patience."

place them in the trunk.

- ▶ Never leave guns in an unlocked vehicle. Theft from an unlocked vehicle is not covered by your insurance.
- ▶ Most thefts from a vehicle are by individuals who know your habits or routine. Do not load your firearms into your vehicle the night before your trip, and don't leave them in your vehicle overnight when you are on the road.
- ▶ Be vigilant. Know who is around you and who can see what is in your vehicle. Remember that rental cars, out-of-state license plates, bumper stickers and decals, and the items you leave visible in your vehicle can identify you as a tourist or traveling shooter, so exercise additional caution.

We'll say it one more time: Don't leave firearms in your unattended vehicle, even for a quick meal. Thieves cannot steal shotguns from your vehicle if you don't leave them in there!

PREPARING TO TRAVEL WITH FIREARMS

If your intention is to grab your shotgun from the safe and stick it in the case on your way out the door without considering some safety measures in advance, you're just looking for trouble. Do your homework! Study the requirements and procedures applicable to your trip before you travel so you are prepared and won't have any surprises.

If you're traveling by airline to your shooting destination, that is especially important. Here are some



▲ When flying internationally, you'll need to declare your firearm with U.S. Customs or the corresponding agency at your destination country. Allow plenty of time for this!

considerations:

▶ Check the TSA website at www.tsa.gov before you travel to verify your understanding of their requirements. Regulations and requirements change, so don't assume the policies in place during your last trip still apply.

▶ Specific airline requirements and procedures vary. Check with your airline before you go to the airport.

▶ Most traveling shooters recommend that you buy ammo after reaching your destination; however, if you are traveling with shotshells or other ammunition, be aware that it also must be packed in an appropriate ammo container. While regulations once prohibited transporting ammunition in the same case as a firearm, TSA regulations currently allow it for most ammo. Specific airline requirements will vary, so check with your airline before you go to the airport.

▶ Do not try to transport any ammo or parts of your firearm in your carry-on.

▶ If you are traveling internationally, do your research before you travel. Know the requirements of your destination country, plus the requirements of your airlines. International travel often requires using multiple airlines, so consider the rules of each of the airlines, not just the one you left your home airport on. Ignorance of the rules will only lead to disappointment and delay.

▶ Do not decorate your gun cases or vehicles with shooting or firearms-related stickers or decals, i.e., no decals for NSCA, NSSA, ATA, SCI, or a brand of guns or ammo.

▶ You must declare your firearm to the airline. It must be unloaded and packed in a locked, hard-sided container. Avoid the words "weapon" or "gun" when declaring your firearms. The use of these terms may be asking for trouble.

▶ Remain present for any inspection by the airline or security personnel. Be polite and follow their instructions, remembering that your only

goal is to get your firearm on your plane as checked baggage. After their examination, lock the container and take the key with you. If possible, place your gun case in a cardboard shipping container after the required inspections. Carry a small

these to the airline and file a written claim before leaving the area. Be sure to obtain a legible copy of your loss report issued by the airline.

▶ If you are shipping your guns to your shooting destination via FedEx, UPS or other carrier, be sure to declare it as



▲ Flying with firearms is not difficult, but it does involve several steps, and you'll want to look up the requirements of the airline you're using.

roll of tape in your carry-on for this purpose.

▶ Cooperate with the airline and airport security personnel. However, be aware of your rights and the requirements of TSA so that you can politely object if a well-intended but uninformed employee wants you to do something unreasonable or unacceptable.

▶ For international travel, allow time to declare your firearms with U.S. Customs. If you are traveling from another country to the U.S., research the originating country's requirements, as well as those in the U.S., and allow ample airport time for completing forms and meeting the requirements.

▶ At your destination airport, open your gun case and inspect your items carefully before leaving the luggage claim area. If there is any damage or missing items, report

a firearm and to follow their shipping guidelines.

▶ Guns should be packed securely in their hard-sided, lockable cases with no room to move around, especially along the length of the gun. Pack your gun case in a cardboard shipping container, if available.

▶ Shipping addresses should avoid any reference to guns, firearms or shooting. For example, instead of "National Shooting Complex," use "NSSA Headquarters." Or use the name of an individual at the recipient address, or initials or abbreviation that deletes any reference to firearms.

▶ Whether you're flying with your firearm or shipping it, use an appropriate, secure case that's capable of protecting it even under extreme circumstances. Don't use a \$100 case for an expensive gun! **CTN**

FIREARMS INSURANCE

Perhaps the most important tip to protect the investment you've made in your firearms and shooting gear is to make sure they are insured before you travel. Have you bought a new gun or other equipment? Is your coverage up-to-date?

One of NSSA-NSCA's most valuable member benefits is discounted gun floater insurance through Sportsman's Insurance Agency, Inc. (SIAI). SIAI was founded and is operated by shooters who understand the needs of gun owners and have a sterling reputation for service. Not only are firearms themselves covered by the policies offered to NSSA-NSCA members, but custom work and other outdoor gear, such as optics, can be insured. SIAI has provided discounted, worldwide firearms insurance to NSSA and NSCA members since 1991, and we highly recommend their coverage and service. See the SIAI website at www.siai.net for more information.