



Flight delays: how do I get compensation?

By Floriane

We had planned everything for our trip to Namibia. Our suitcases were packed, our seats reserved, and our arrival perfectly timed to reach Windhoek before heading for the Namib desert. But at the airport, reality caught up with us: our flight displayed “Delayed”... and then the announcements fell. A technical problem. The plane won’t take off for several hours.

At the time, we were thinking mainly of the hours we’d lost on the ground and our first night already booked. But we soon remember that such a long **flight delay** can entitle you to financial compensation, provided you know your rights and apply properly. We give you all the practical info in this article.

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When departure turns into a test of patience

We were already settled in the departure lounge when the first announcement spoke of a “**technical hitch**“. Thirty minutes, then an hour... and finally a six-hour delay. Sitting on our backpacks, we had to get out our phones to notify our hotel and our car rental agency, in order to postpone our reservations and avoid losing our first night and our vehicle.

The most frustrating thing was the uncertainty. Each announcement seemed to push back the departure time a little further. The kids were getting restless, the passengers were milling around and, meanwhile, our first day in Namibia was literally flying by.

Flight delays: what European law says

Let's get down to the nitty-gritty of the legislation, because as soon as we knew the delay was going to exceed several hours, we quickly looked into how we could be compensated and recover at least part of our lost expenses, such as our first non-refundable hotel night.

In Europe, **EC Regulation 261/2004** protects travellers in the event of long delays. If you arrive at your destination **more than 3 hours** late, you may be entitled to compensation ranging from €250 to €600, depending on the distance of the flight.

For a long-haul flight (over 3,500 km) departing from the EU, a delay of over 4 hours can already justify **€600** in compensation per passenger. In our case, a 6-hour delay from Paris to Windhoek clearly fell into this category.

→ **Important:** a “technical problem” is not considered an exceptional circumstance. The airline therefore remains liable and must compensate passengers, unless proven otherwise.

How to claim your compensation

After checking our entitlements, we decided to put together our file. Here are the key steps to follow:

1. **Report the delay to the airline** as soon as possible, ideally at the airport.
2. **Keep all proof:** boarding pass, baggage tags, e-mails received, photos of the notice board if necessary.

3. **Ask in writing for** the official reason for the delay (this prevents the company from later invoking an “exceptional” cause).

4. **Apply on time**

→ To maximize your chances of obtaining compensation in the event of [flight delay](#) or cancellation, without drowning in red tape, we recommend using a platform like **AirHelp**. In just a few minutes, it can check your eligibility, handle all the formalities and negotiate directly with the airline. This avoids lengthy exchanges and complicated forms, while increasing your chances of success.

AirHelp offers a number of different formulas: either a commission deducted from the amount of compensation obtained, or an annual subscription that allows you to benefit from the service at no extra cost on claims.

How to reduce the impact of a long delay on your trip

A delay of several hours can quickly ruin part of your stay, but certain habits can help limit the effects:

- **Choose connections with time to spare** to avoid missing the next flight.
- **Download a flight-tracking app**([FlightAware](#)...) to stay informed before official announcements.
- **Have a plan B in place**: a list of hotels close to the airport, local contacts, or activities you can do even if you arrive late.

In our case, even though we missed our first night at the lodge, we were able to postpone certain activities and take full advantage of the following days.

Travelling with peace of mind: what we'll remember

That 6-hour delay was a real frustration at the time. But it also taught us that a trip isn't just about the destination, it's also about everything that happens between departure and arrival.

Above all, we realized that it's crucial to **know your rights**. Without this information, we would simply have arrived later, having lost a day and money.

Thanks to the claim, we obtained compensation that covered part of our expenses on site.

Namibia: a destination that quickly makes you forget a flight delay

We're going to take advantage of this article to give you a few ideas of what to expect in Namibia, because even if our departure was delayed, this country is well worth every minute spent at the airport to get there.

In the end, we only lost our night in [Windhoek](#), and as soon as we arrived, we headed straight for our first point of interest: **Tsauchab River**, for the **Olive** Trail trek. An incredible walk amidst the mineral landscapes, gorges and arid vegetation typical of the region.

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We then headed for the Sossusvlei desert, where the orange dunes blaze at sunrise. After a stop on the west coast, near Walvis Bay, we ended our stay on the endless plains of the [Etosha National Park](#) where giraffes, elephants and lions come face to face, each day holds its own share of wonder.

The roads are long, but they pass through breathtaking scenery, punctuated by small villages where time seems to stand still. The nights, far from light pollution, reveal a starry sky the like of which is rare.

So, yes, our flight delay nibbled away at a few hours of this trip, but it in no way detracted from the magic of this destination. To prepare for your adventure and avoid unpleasant surprises, read our complete guide [Discover Namibia](#).

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