

## Going Public

*by Maddy Cranley*

A recent welcome break in routine saw me on an airplane to Philadelphia, not everyone's idea of a restful spot, but I happen to like the big city. Philadelphia, with its wonderful historical sites comfortably settled in a busy urban center, is a rather pleasant venue in which to spend a few days. When I travel, with the exception of a long car journey, I purposely do not take along any kind of knitting or craft work. Since I have the distinct pleasure of blurred boundaries between everyday work and hobbies, I deliberately leave needles and yarn at home just to give my hands a break and allow my mind to focus on any novel ideas lurking in the marketplace. There is supposedly an increase in commuter knitting - crafters taking along their projects while they travel to and fro. I decided to make a concentrated effort to notice if there was any commuter crafting happening on the route I was going to travel. I was looking not just for knitting but any type of craft that could be managed in the lap on a wiggling train or swerving bus.

I have had some interesting commuter crafting experiences in the past. Sitting amid the bustle and confusion while waiting for a flight in the San Francisco airport, I once learned the craft of bead weaving. I spotted a woman picking out beads from a boxful beside her and with a needle and thread, fashioning an extraordinary necklace. I approached her, asking if she would mind telling me what she was doing. I was familiar with beading methods but not this one. While we waited, she generously proceeded to teach me the method of this craft. Our flights were soon called and we parted ways. I couldn't wait to get home and attack my stash of beads. I immediately practiced what she had taught me and I still dabble in this method of beading. Another time at Chicago O'Hare, I sat near a woman working on a quilting project. We began a conversation and she kindly gave me a list of great quilting books that she had found helpful. Although I must admit that I have yet to take up quilting on a serious level, I will always have that memory and list of books as an inspiration to start. Both of these women were undoubtedly organized and comfortable while crafting in that hectic environment.

There is no doubt that comfort is a big factor. You must be relaxed in a seat or situation that suits your knitting style. If you knit with elbows that stick out like penguin flippers, you are going to feel restricted. If you have more of a closed-wing approach, narrow seating and cramped rows on the airplanes will likely not bother you. While being careful not to poke a seatmate, a few prayers for a minimum of air pockets and potholes would not go amiss. Anticipating the motion of your chosen chariot, you will become more able to weather the bumps and grinds of the road or rail and the stitches will stay on track.

Another point is that you have to be very organized. You must make sure that you pack accessories that you may need along with your needles and yarn. A good knitting bag is essential and should certainly not be one of those popular crocheted pouches, allowing needles to poke through the sides and possibly those of your fellow passenger. The printed pattern should be small enough to not slide off your lap but with print large enough to avoid peering or squinting at graphs or complicated stitch sequences. Stitch markers and counters are a must to keep your place when your flight is called or your stop is reached.

So did I see anyone doing anything? Nothing at all. With all the thousands of people I encountered or passed in that week, no one was doing anything of a crafting nature. This experience has made me have a change of heart. Just to contribute to keeping a public face on the craft of knitting, not to mention the completion of a few more projects, I have decided to become more organized for the next trip and take along some knitting. With a little planning for comfort and convenience, my journeys can become roads less unravelled!

---

**Maddy Cranley** is a professional knitwear designer, who has created exclusive designs for knitting and craft magazines, authored and published three books on the subject of creating felt garments and projects from handknitting, and produces an ever-growing line of maddy laine handknitting patterns. For additional information, see <http://www.maddycraft.com>

© 2003

-30-