

Airlines

Open Skies Means More Choice for Airline Consumers

The EU-U.S. Open Skies air transport agreement means more choice for consumers. The treaty went into effect March 30, replacing 31 bilateral agreements between the EU's member states and the U.S. Until now, EU airlines could not operate flights to the U.S. from outside their home country. The most immediate effect was increased service into Heathrow, with Continental Airlines, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines immediately starting flights into Heathrow. US Airways is also adding service to Heathrow. Air France-KLM is beginning flights from Los Angeles to the UK. The EU estimates that the agreement will increase traffic. Although logic dictates lower prices as a result of increased competition, high fuel prices and added airport surcharges at Heathrow, for example, are tempering any immediate fare decreases, according to the European Travel Commission. (Source: EU, ETC press releases).

DOT, Airlines Work to Reduce Chronic Delays

Airlines serving Newark Liberty Airport have agreed to temporarily cap and spread flights for two years at a level that will allow 30 more flights per day than last summer while helping to reduce chronic delays, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. The cap, which will apply to both domestic and international flights, will allow an average of 83 flights per hour during peak periods and will go into effect in early May. (Source: DOT press release).

Jet Blue Charges More for Extra Legroom

JetBlue has reconfigured its Airbus A320 fleet to give customers extra legroom in specific rows for an additional fee. It is offering 38 inches of seat pitch in rows two through five and rows 10 and 11. All other seats have 34 inches of seat pitch. The price for the additional space starts at \$10 for short haul flights. It's not the first carrier to offer this kind of choice. Midwest Airlines Signature Seating gives seats with a 36-inch seat pitch, two to three inches more than normal to passengers traveling on select unrestricted fares and, on its 717 aircraft, to other passengers for an incremental fee. The typical economy class seat pitch tends to be 31 to 32 inches. (Sources: JetBlue, Midwest press releases and SeatGuru.com).

Northwest Adds Luggage Fees

Starting May 5, Northwest Airlines will charge coach class passengers \$25 each way for their second checked bag. Other changes include an increase from \$80 to \$100 for three or more checked bags, and an increase from \$25 to \$50 for overweight bags greater than 50 pounds. The announcement follows similar moves by United Airlines and US Airways. (Source: Northwest press release).

Security

Clear Launches at Washington, D.C. Airports, Oakland Airport

Clear, which expedites frequent travelers progress through airport security, has opened its expedited security lanes at Washington Reagan National and Washington Dulles as well as at Oakland International Airport. Clear members are pre-screened by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and, after application approval, are provided with a card that allows exclusive access to Clear's security lanes nationwide. The Clear Card verifies a fingerprint or iris image selected by members during enrollment. Clear cards are now accepted at 16 U.S. airports, including Cincinnati, Denver, Indianapolis, New York LaGuardia, New York Kennedy, Newark and San Francisco. (Source: Clear press release)

TSA Expands Self-Select Lanes to Six More Airports

The Transportation Security Administration is expanding its self-select lanes that allow passengers to separate themselves by their familiarity with security clearance processes and their needs. There are three lanes: expert, for business travelers flying several times a month; casual, for less frequent travelers who are familiar with the security process; and family/special assistance, for passengers traveling with small children or strollers, elderly passengers and passengers who may need special assistance. Salt Lake City International and Denver International Airports instituted the self-select lane process first. The TSA is in the process of selecting the next six airports for the program. (Source: TSA press release).

Hotels

Hyatt Opens New Dallas Hotel

The Hyatt Regency North Dallas, a 342-room hotel located in Richardson's telecom corridor, has opened. Formerly the Richardson Hotel, it has undergone a \$6.4 million upgrade. It now has a Hyatt Regency Club, Hyatt check-in kiosks, renovated fitness and business centers and 13,000 square feet of upgraded meeting and banquet space. (Source: Hyatt press release).

Twin Cities Hilton Opens

The Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington has opened in the suburb of Bloomington, within ten miles of both the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the Minneapolis Convention Center. It has a 24-hour business center; executive level lounge; video messaging and conferencing; and 9,200 square feet of meeting space. It also has an indoor pool with whirlpool, a 24-hour fitness center and two restaurants. (Source: Hilton press release).



Spotlight On.....

Cutting Your Travel Spending

Topaz International, which has been analyzing travel expenditures for 30 years, has found that business travel itineraries booked by a designated corporate travel management company averaged \$56 less than the exact same itinerary booked on a public internet site. The company exactly replicated trips on public sites such as Expedia, Orbitz and Travelocity as well as on airline sites. It also looked at whether or not the volume of a corporation's airfare spending affected results. IT found:

- ***Smaller corporations generally have lower-priced airline tickets when compared to corporations with larger volumes of air spending.***
- ***However, larger corporations are saving more per ticket than some of their small counterparts, probably because they get bigger discounts because of their high travel volume.***

Bradley Seitz, president and CEO of Topaz, said that finding the lowest airfares remains a key focus of travel managers, a major headache given the fact that travel distribution remains highly fragmented. (Source: Topaz press release).