

A Business Travel Update from Milne Business Travel Services. 24 Airport Road, West Lebanon, NH 03784 (603) 298-6644

Airlines

American, BA, Iberia Form Transatlantic Alliance

Airlines continue to seek scale by working ever more closely together. The latest example of this is the business agreement between American Airlines, British Airways and Iberia. The airlines say the deal will give their customers more destinations to choose from while helping the airlines to save money and attract new customers, which in turn would ease the upward pressure on airfares due to rising fuel costs. Fuel prices are dropping but continue to take their toll, as evidenced by the shutdown of the discount transatlantic carrier Zoom Airlines (Source: American, BA, Iberia press releases and Zoom website).

American, Delta Offer WiFi

Inflight Delta Air Lines made its' announcement first but American Airlines was first out of the gate with inflight WiFi. American now has inflight WiFi on its Boeing 767-200s flying between New York and San Francisco and Los Angeles. The service costs \$12.95 on flights of more than three hours; travelers simply turn on their WiFi enabled devices, including laptops, smart phones and PDAs, once they hit 10,000 feet and are connected to Aircell's Gogo portal, the WiFi provider, where they sign up for the service. Delta, meanwhile, will offer WiFi on its domestic fleet of 330 mainline aircraft, also with Gogo, introducing it on its MD 88/99 aircraft this fall and rolling it out fleet wide in the first half of 2009. The service will cost \$9.95 on flights of three hours or less and \$12.95 on flights of three hours or more. (Source: American, Delta press releases).

TSA Lets You Leave Your Laptop in Some Bags

The Transportation Security Administration will now let you leave your laptop in its bag when you go through security as long as it meets new "checkpoint friendly" standards. These bags should have a designated laptop-only section; they must completely unfold to lie flat on the X-ray belt; no metal snaps, zippers or buckles inside, underneath or on top of the laptop-only section; no pockets on the inside or outside of the laptop-only section and packed in the laptop-only section other than the computer itself. The TSA worked with laptop bag manufacturers to come up with the new standards. (Source: TSA press release).

Airline Eliminates Life Jackets

Air Canada Jazz is eliminating lifejackets, calling them redundant since seats act as flotation devices. Transport Canada permits flotation devices, like the seats, instead of life jackets if the planes fly within 90 kilometers of shore. The seat cushions lift off and have restraints on the bottom through which passengers can slip their arms through. There will be life jackets available for infants. The idea is to save on weight and fuel. (Source: Travel Pulse Daily).

United Furloughs Flight Attendants, Tests Charging for Meals Over Atlantic

United Airlines is furloughing 1,500 flight attendants as a result of flight reductions it announced this summer. That is about 10 percent of its cabin workers and part of its efforts to cut 7,000 jobs by the end of 2009. It also began testing charging for inflight meals over the Atlantic. On transatlantic flights out of Dulles, it is testing selling Buy on Board options, including sandwiches, salads and snack boxes. It will evaluate results at year's end. (Source: press reports, United press release).

Americans Divided on Inflight Cell Phone Use

Inflight wireless services could presage inflight cell phone use. Americans are divided on whether or not passengers should be able to use their cell phones inflight, according to a study by the Department of Transportation. The younger you are, the more likely you are to favor it—almost half (47.7 percent) of 18- to 34-year-olds approved of the idea. Only a quarter of those over 65 favored the move; those between 35 and 64 almost evenly divided—40 percent say they should allowed, 46 percent said they should not and the rest aren't sure. (Source: DOT press release).

Hotels

Sheraton Opens at JFK

The Sheraton JFK Hotel, a new build, has opened at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport. The 150-room hotel is a full-service hotel with meeting facilities, complimentary shuttle service to and from the airport, a restaurant, indoor pool, business center, fitness center and Club floor. (Source: Starwood Hotels & Resorts press release).

Marriott Raleigh City Center Opens

The 400-room Raleigh Marriott City Center has opened next to the new 500,000-square-foot Raleigh Convention Center. The 16-story hotel is attached to the convention center and has more than 15,000 square feet of meeting space, a business center, swimming pool and fitness center. It has two Italian restaurants and a 1,400 square foot Starbucks. (Source: Marriott press release).

Cars

Avis and Budget Offer "Flicks to Go"

Avis Rent A Car and Budget Rent A Car are introducing Flicks-To-Go, portable DVD players that attach to the back of a car's headrest. They include a choice of speakers for multiple viewers or two high-quality headphones which customers can keep. (Source: Avis press release).

Spotlight On...Record Airfares

If it feels as though you're paying more for airfare, there's a reason. The latest American Express Business Travel Monitor reports that domestic and international airfares hit record levels in the second quarter of 2008. The good news is that companies can save money by emphasizing travel policy compliance.

Among the study's findings:

- The average one-way domestic fare was \$260, up \$24 from the same period last year, a 10 percent increase, and up \$27 from the first quarter, a 12 percent increase.
- The average one-way international fare hit its highest level since the inception of the Business Travel Monitor in 1999. These fares increased 11 percent over the same period last year, averaging \$1,080.
- The percentage of international business class tickets dropped to their lowest level since 2004. Increases in the percentage of tickets purchased for the back of the plane indicate that travelers are trading down.

(Source: American Express press release).

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