

Zagat Releases Report on Global Air Travel Surveying 112 Major Carriers and Airports
Continental, JetBlue, Virgin America, Midwest and Southwest Soar Over Domestic Skies

Singapore, Cathay Pacific, Emirates, Virgin, Air New Zealand Take International Honors

Airports: Tampa International is Flyers' Favorite, LaGuardia is Least Liked

Zagat Survey today announced the results of its most recent Airlines Survey. The survey is based on the experiences of 9,950 frequent fliers and travel professionals who rated 85 major world airlines and 27 domestic U.S. airports. Each airline was separately rated on its premium and economy service for both domestic and international flights. The average surveyor took 16.3 flights in the past year aggregating 162,000 trips -- 38 % of which were for leisure and 62% for business. The respondents also provided some candid comments about flying the friendly -- or not so friendly -- skies.

Overall: The good news is that the average ratings, factoring in Comfort, Service and Food scores, rose slightly for both domestic and international service. The bad news is that people are flying less. As always, international flights' average scores were higher than their domestic ones; for example, the international average for economy class was a middling 15.73 on the Zagat 30-point scale, but the domestic economy class average was a dismal 13.82. On a happier note, domestic business class ratings jumped almost 2 points on average.

"The airline industry continues to be plagued with delays, cancellations and consumer dissatisfaction," said Tim Zagat, co-founder and CEO of Zagat Survey. "While no airline is immune to these issues, a few domestic airlines rose to the top, including Continental, JetBlue, Midwest, Virgin America and Southwest. As for international travel, Singapore Airlines, Emirates, Cathay Pacific, Air New Zealand and Virgin Atlantic consistently out-fly their competition."

Domestic Winners: This year, among large domestic airlines, Continental was voted No. 1 in premium class while JetBlue took top honors for economy. Looking at the U.S. Big Six -- American, Continental, Delta, Northwest, United, and US Airways (soon to be the "Big Five" with the merger of Delta and Northwest), Continental led in most categories, as it did in the 2007 Zagat Airline Survey. It was also deemed the "best value" among all airlines for international flights.

Among midsized domestics, Virgin America, the low-cost, high-style newcomer launched by Richard Branson in 2007, continued to impress, ranking No. 1 in premium and No. 2 (after winner Midwest) in economy. Southwest Airlines was saluted for offering the best value domestically as well as having the best frequent-flier program, luggage policy and on-time performance. And as for airports, Tampa International won in overall quality; La Guardia came in last.

Overseas: As usual, the international airlines flying larger aircraft over longer distances fared much better than U.S. domestic carriers. Singapore Airlines gained altitude, sweeping the competition for the twentieth year in a row for both international economy and premium classes. Singapore swept up the No. 1 spot for Food, Service and Comfort. Other international leaders include Emirates, Cathay Pacific, Virgin Atlantic Airways and Air New Zealand. The International premium class average went up 1.4 points on the 30-point Zagat scale since last year.

And The Winners Are: Top Five:

Large U.S. Economy Class: 1. JetBlue Airways
 2. Southwest
 3. Continental
 4. AirTran Airways
 5. Delta Air Lines

Large U.S. Premium Class: 1. Continental Airlines
 2. American Airlines
 3. Delta Air Lines
 4. AirTran Airways
 5. Northwest Airlines

Large Int'l Economy Class: 1. Singapore Airlines
 2. Emirates Airline
 3. Air New Zealand
 4. Cathay Pacific Airways
 5. Thai Airways

Large Int'l Premium Class: 1. Singapore Airlines
 2. Cathay Pacific Airways
 3. Virgin Atlantic Airways
 4. Air New Zealand
 5. ANA (All Nippon Airways)

Mid-Sized Economy Class: 1. Midwest Airlines
 2. Virgin America
 3. Hawaiian Airlines
 4. Alaska Airlines

5. Frontier Airlines

- Mid-Sized Premium Class:
1. Virgin America
 2. Hawaiian Airlines
 3. Alaska Airlines

Entertaining The Masses: Travelers have no choice but to accept the all-too-common flight delays and cancellations. Thus, in-flight entertainment has become more important than ever to help keep passengers occupied. Surveyors gave top in-flight entertainment honors to JetBlue domestically, and Virgin Atlantic internationally.

Going Green: Environmental consciousness is growing part of the everyday decisions people make, and a full 30% of surveyors said they would be more likely to fly with airlines that introduced measures to become greener. When asked which domestic U.S. airline they think operates in the most eco-friendly manner, 27% of surveyors said JetBlue, followed by Southwest Airlines (25%) and Virgin America (14%).

Websites: When booking air travel, 60% of surveyors use airline websites, while only 4% call the airline. Sites such as Expedia, Travelocity and the like are used by 18%, while 9% book through work and 8% use a travel agent. Surveyors awarded top website honors to Southwest Airlines, Virgin America and JetBlue in that order.

Bits and Bytes: Due to the general turbulence in the economy, fliers say they are flying less than they did last year. With free snacks and meals becoming a thing of the past, only 23% of fliers say they would purchase snacks onboard; 57% would rather purchase a meal at the airport instead. While 65% of surveyors use their frequent flier miles for free flights, 25% use them for upgrades and 10% do not use them at all.

Outtakes: The surveyors had plenty to say about the current state of airline travel. Below is a sample of their comments that our lawyers say are not suitable to print with the airline's name. For a full list of outtakes and survey results, please visit <http://www.zagat.com/airline> .

- "The Rhet Butler of airlines: they just don't give a damn"
- "Bathrooms smell like the lion house at the zoo on a hot day"
- "Domestic economy is a mobile prison lacking the food and the exercise yard"

- "Next they'll charge for using the air vents, seat belts and bathrooms"
- "Did I get fatter or did their seats get smaller?"
- "Too bad passengers can't chip in for a flight attendant friendliness upgrade"
- "Just another cattle car, but the cows usually get more respect"
- "They don't allow guns in the airport because passengers would shoot the desk clerks and be acquitted"
- "Hot food in coach -- so retro!"
- "Would rather flap my arms than book this airline"
- "Gets you where you're going... sometimes"
- "Trying hard to encourage us to drive"

About Zagat Survey, LLC

Known as the "burgundy bible," Zagat Survey is the world's most trusted source for information about where to eat, drink, stay and play around the globe, and as such has become a symbol of quality. Zagat Survey rates and reviews airlines, restaurants, hotels, nightlife, movies, music, golf, resorts, shopping, spas, and a range of other entertainment categories in over 100 countries and has been lauded as the "most up-to-date, comprehensive and reliable guides ever published" and as "a necessity second only to a valid credit card." Zagat content is available in print, on the Web, on the Palm and Windows Mobile operating systems, on BlackBerry, on mobile phones, and on TV. For more information, visit ZAGAT.com.

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