



AAA Corporate Travel Newsletter September 14, 2009

All U.S. carriers now charge for a second bag to Europe; United ends holdout

United Airlines announced on Thursday that it will begin charging customers for a second checked bag on routes to Europe. With that, "the lone U.S. carrier to buck the trend of charging international passengers to check luggage is joining the fee-for-all," the *Chicago Tribune* writes. The paper notes that "every other major U.S. carrier has unveiled luggage fees on trans-Atlantic flights this year, seeking to raise revenue, recover money lost through discounting and to offset a falloff in business-class travel."

As for United's new charge, Reuters says "passengers flying trans-Atlantic routes will pay \$50 for a second bag at the airport or \$45 if purchased on the carrier's website. This applies on routes going from the United States, Mexico and the Caribbean to Europe and back. Passengers flying trans-Atlantic routes will pay \$50 for a second bag at the airport or \$45 if purchased on the carrier's website. This applies on routes going from the United States, Mexico and the Caribbean to Europe and back."

As is typically the case, some customers will be exempt from the fee. Elite-level frequent-fliers, customers on premium-fare tickets and active U.S. military traveling on orders will not be subject to the charge. *The Wall Street Journal* adds that US Airways, Continental, American and Delta "already have announced similar fees. American, unlike United, hasn't added the second-bag fee on its flights to Moscow. US Airways charges \$55 for the second bag at the airport, or \$50 if the traveler checks in on its Web site. Continental excludes Brazil from its \$25 fee for the second checked bag on trips (to) Europe and Latin America."

USAToday.com, September 11, 2009

TSA: Airline ban on liquids won't be lifted soon

Airline passengers in the USA won't be saying goodbye anytime soon to one of the thorniest hassles in air travel: restrictions on the amount of liquids that can be carried on a plane.

Government and security officials say the ban is still likely to be lifted some day, but not as quickly as they once thought.

Three British men were convicted in London on Monday of plotting to murder thousands in 2006 by downing at least seven trans-Atlantic airliners using liquid explosives hidden in soda bottles. The men planned to assemble bombs in airplane toilets using hydrogen-peroxide-based explosives injected into bottles.

Security rules adopted three years ago after the liquid-bomb plot was foiled limit passengers to carrying 3-ounce containers, which must fit in a 1-quart bag. Former Transportation Security Administration chief [Kip Hawley](#) predicted a year ago that passengers would be able to carry large liquid containers through checkpoints by this fall.

TSA spokeswoman Sterling Payne said Tuesday that Hawley's timetable will not be met but that easing liquid restrictions "remains a priority." The obstacles involve technology and developing software that can be added to checkpoint X-ray machines so they can spot explosives.

The TSA has taken a major step by installing 875 high-tech X-ray machines in 78 airports that can handle the software addition. Hundreds more of the machines must be installed at the other 370 commercial airports, a process that will take at least another year, Payne said.

Aviation security consultant Rich Roth said the software "is not working as well as they had expecte" because it sounds false alarms on too many liquids that turn out to be harmless.

Hasbrouck Miller, vice president of X-ray maker Smiths Detection, said he is "quite optimistic" that the technology will allow restrictions to be eased.

Europeans also are working on the technology, said Steve Lott of the International Air Transport Association. The European Union and at least 30 other nations have liquid restrictions. Any easing would have to be done internationally "so you don't have different standards in different countries," Lott said.

USAToday.com, September 9, 2009

American, United offer double elite-qualifying miles

This is the time of year when frequent flyers start keeping an eye on their mileage totals to see which elite level they might achieve for 2010, and American Airlines is making it easier for AAdvantage members to advance with a new promotion. Members who register at www.aa.com/elite can earn double elite-qualifying miles (EQMs) from now through December 15 when they fly on American, American Eagle or AmericanConnection. Within hours of American's announcement, United Airlines followed suit with its own matching offer to Mileage Plus members. The United promotion, good for United and United Express flights through December 15, also requires online registration, at www.united.com/offer/mpw049 for those who want double EQMs, or www.united.com/offer/mpw059 for double elite-qualifying segments. (You can only sign up for one option; those who sign up for both will get double EQMs.)

Meanwhile, AAdvantage is also offering extra bonus perks to those who earn more than the minimum required EQMs for their elite level as of December 31, 2009. Executive Platinum members who rack up 125,000 EQMs during 2009 can select two of the following: A pair of one-way system wide upgrades; a one-year Admirals Club membership; 25,000 bonus miles; and the chance to give a friend AAdvantage Gold status for a year. Platinum members who earn 75,000 to 99,999 EQMs can select one bonus: four 500-mile upgrades, a pair of Admirals Club one-day passes; 15,000 bonus miles; or one-year Gold status for a friend. Gold members who achieve 40,000 to 49,999 EQMs can select two 500-mile upgrades, a set of luggage tags, one Admirals Club day pass, or 7,500 bonus miles.

Executive Travel SkyGuide e-Alert, September 8, 2009

Obama Administration orders new limits on traveler laptop searches

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano has issued an order setting new restrictions on the ability of border agents to inspect and hold data from international travelers' laptops and other devices. The new rules do not change the right of customs and immigration agents to search and/or hold a traveler's laptop for any reason, but they now require that a supervisor must be present during laptop searches; that a laptop or other device may be taken only if the agent has reason to believe it contains possible evidence of a crime; that any seized property must be returned within 30 days; that the agency must inform travelers if any data is copied from their hard drives; and that border agents must consult with federal lawyers before they look at an individual's sensitive legal materials, medical records, or articles being written by journalists.

Napolitano said the new directives "strike the balance between respecting the civil liberties and privacy of all travelers while ensuring DHS can take the lawful actions necessary to secure our borders." Interested parties can find links to the full order at www.dhs.gov. The new DHS rules were announced just days after the American Civil Liberties Union filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit in federal court, asking the court to force DHS's Customs and Border Protection agency to disclose "the criteria used for selecting passengers for suspicionless (laptop) searches, the number of people who have been subject to the searches, the number of devices and documents retained and the reasons for their detention."

Executive Travel SkyGuide e-Alert, September 8, 2009

GSA cuts 2010 hotel per diem rates in many U.S. cities

As the U.S. hotel industry continues to lower room rates in an effort to battle declining consumer demand, the U.S. Government's General Services Administration is reducing the maximum allowable reimbursable per diem rate for federal travelers' hotel spending in fiscal 2010, which begins October 1. Although the overall nationwide per diem will increase slightly for 2010, GSA said that per diems will decline significantly in a number of cities where hotel rates have dropped in the past year.

For example, federal travelers (and contractors who are bound by federal spending limits) who visit New York City will face a maximum per diem of \$209 a night for hotel costs, a drop of \$76 from fiscal 2009. (That rate applies for January-March; per diems vary seasonally, along with hotel rates.)

For Boston, the November-March per diem will fall by \$35, to \$168 a night. Although maximum hotel spending is dropping in many expensive cities, the allowable expense for meals and incidentals is going up by \$7 in New York, Washington D.C., San Francisco and Boston, to \$71.

For city-by-city specifics, go to www.gsa.gov, and click on "per diem rates" in the left-hand menu. On the resulting page, select 2010FY to see rates by state, or download an Excel file with all 2010 rates. According to the latest hotel industry report from Smith Travel Research, the U.S. lodging industry's average occupancy level during July 2009 was 64.1 percent, down 7.3 percent from a year ago.

Average daily rates for the month fell by 9.1 percent year-over-year. The biggest decline in average daily rates was in New York City, down 27.3 percent to \$182.70. Average rates in the San Francisco/San Mateo region fell by 17.2 percent to \$128.78.

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