

TripAdvisor Annual Air Travel Survey Finds Travelers Taking to the Skies in 2011

Travelers Continue to Fly in 2011 Despite Rising Airfares

NEWTON, Mass., April 21, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- TripAdvisor®, the world's largest travel site*, today announced the results of its third annual air travel survey of more than 2,000 U.S. respondents. Ninety-two percent of travelers said they plan to fly this year, and 47 percent said they have already taken a flight in 2011, suggesting that rising airfares have not had a significant impact on air travel. Ninety-one percent of respondents said they flew in 2010.

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Rising Airfare Effect

While the vast majority of respondents plan to fly in 2011, 43 percent of travelers said they've found they've had to book connecting flights to stay within their flight budget. Thirty-three percent said they are planning to drive for one or more of their trips in 2011 when they previously would have flown, as a result of rising airfares.

"Fee'd" Up with Airline Charges

Forty-six percent of travelers think checked baggage fees are the most annoying fee airlines now charge, followed by 24 percent for seat selection fees and 18 percent for carry-on baggage fees. Seventy-two percent of respondents expect the overall cost of airline fees to rise during the remainder of the year. Travelers expect priority seating fees (49 percent), carry-on baggage fees (46 percent) and seat selection fees (41 percent) to either be added or expanded by some airlines in 2011.

Carry On Carrying On

With increasing airline fees for checked luggage, 56 percent of travelers said they regularly carry on their bags to avoid additional fees. Additionally, 52 percent said they are more likely to pack only carry-on bags when they fly this year due to rising checked baggage fees.

T-S-A-Okay

While there have been changes to airport security over the past year, 51 percent of travelers said they have been comfortable all along with airport security. Sixteen percent of respondents said they are now comfortable with the recent TSA security changes, while 34 percent said they are not comfortable with the changes. When asked if they were more comfortable with a full-body scan or a full-body pat down at airport security, 82 percent of travelers would opt for a full-body scan, while only 18 percent would be more comfortable with a full-body pat down.

Fliers Beg for Leg Space

Uncomfortable seats and limited legroom topped the list of traveler gripes about air travel, with 26 percent of respondents saying it was their biggest complaint. This was followed by the 23 percent who said airline fees and the 17 percent who cited rising airfares. When asked what one thing airlines should do to make the in-flight experience better, the vast majority – 43 percent—cited more legroom.

Sick or Smelly, Whoa Nelly!

Twenty-eight percent of respondents said that a sick seatmate was the worst kind of seatmate to have on an airplane. This was followed by the 27 percent of travelers who said a smelly seatmate and the 13 percent who responded a "space intruder." When it comes to socializing with their seatmate during a flight, 74 percent of travelers said that a little small talk is fine, but that they like to keep to themselves for most of the flight. Only 12 percent of respondents said they enjoy socializing with their seatmate during a flight.

Mobile on the Fly

More than a quarter of travelers (26 percent) said they have used a smartphone or mobile device for their flight planning. Twenty-one percent have researched their flights, while five percent have researched and booked on their mobile. While traveling, 30 percent checked their flight status, 17 percent have checked into their flight and seven percent have used a mobile device as a boarding pass.

This Food Just Doesn't Fly

When asked to grade airline food on a scale of one to ten, travelers rated it an average of five. Fifty-one percent of respondents said they thought airline food has gotten worse over the past five years, while only 12 percent said they thought it has gotten better. Perhaps as a result, 42 percent of respondents said they typically bring food from home for the flight and 38 percent purchase food from the airport, while only seven percent said they purchase food on the plane.

Additional Air Travel Tidbits:

- The number one carry-on essential for travelers was a book, according to 74 percent—more than an iPad/tablet, laptop and portable music player combined.
- 54 percent of travelers chose the aisle as their favorite seat, while 42 percent pick the window.
- 82 percent of respondents think passengers of size should be required to purchase tickets for two seats on their flights if they infringe on the seat next to them.
- 35 percent said they often take advantage of frequent flier points, while 13 percent said they always do.
- 77 percent of respondents said they would go on a last minute trip if they found a great deal on a flight.

"Travelers are planning to take to the skies in droves in 2011, despite rising airfares and increasing airline fees," said Bryan Saltzburg, general manager of [TripAdvisor Flights](#). "While the headwinds may seem a bit daunting, we're still seeing some great airfare deals to top destinations. We recommend that travelers shop around to find the best flight deals, track airfares with e-mail alerts such as Air Watch, and use tools like the TripAdvisor Fees Estimator to get their 'all-in' ticket price, with airline fees included, before they book."

About TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor® is the world's largest travel site, enabling travelers to plan and have the perfect trip. TripAdvisor offers trusted advice from real travelers and a wide variety of travel choices and planning features (including Flights search, TripAdvisor Mobile and TripAdvisor Trip Friends) with seamless links to booking tools.

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