



Summer air travel: Indianapolis fares better than many parts of the U.S.

INDIANAPOLIS—As goes the economy, so goes the travel industry. According to national experts, by the time consumers add up airfare, hotel, rental cars, restaurant meals, and admission to attractions, many will decide to take vacations closer to home this year.

The good news is that Indianapolis International Airport (IND) remains in the top 25 percent of all U.S. airports for having low fares. In general, fares in Indianapolis are less expensive than those found in neighboring cities including Cincinnati, Dayton, and Louisville.

IND is one of nine states actually experiencing an increase in the number of available seats on domestic flights. Airports in Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Kentucky have all experienced declines while IND has grown nearly four percent.

IND is also one of the nation's best airports in terms of on-time departures, with 76 percent of all flights departing on time.

TRAVEL TIPS FOR CONSUMERS

For consumers who do plan to travel by air and have not yet purchased tickets, the best advice is to do as much comparison shopping as possible. Other suggestions include:

- Be flexible on departure dates and times, if possible.
- Purchase tickets online and avoid calling and asking airline agents for assistance.
- Read the terms and conditions when purchasing tickets to understand all fees and charges. Remember baggage fees apply each way on roundtrip flights.
- To avoid delays, book flights as early in the day as possible.

Airlines are raising prices and reducing capacity in response to record oil prices. According to the Air Transport Association (ATA), the price of crude oil is 217 percent higher than in 2000 and the cost of refining a gallon of jet fuel is up sixfold.

In an attempt to offset soaring fuel prices, airlines are adding surcharges and fees to ticket prices. According to a June 4 article in *USA Today*, however, the largest airlines are continuing to fill more than 80 percent of their available seats despite the increases.

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The most talked-about industry surcharge this summer is for second checked bags. Several airlines have initiated a \$25 charge for a second bag in recent months and if fuel prices don't decline, it could become an industry-wide standard.

At least one airline is charging \$15 for the first checked bag, which will take effect later this month. In addition, others airlines have additional fees for bags that weigh more than 50 pounds. So, pack lightly and don't take any clothes, shoes, or other items that are not needed.

Airlines are also eliminating older, less fuel-efficient aircraft from their fleets. Flight routes that are the least profitable for airlines are the first being eliminated. Others are also cutting the number of flights they offer.

Indianapolis is facing fewer reductions many other parts of the U.S. in terms of flight reductions. In fact, a May 30 article in [USA Today](#) reports the number of flights departing from Indianapolis has actually increased by 3.8 percent.

In comparison, the same article reports flights departing from nearby airports have decreased:

- Cincinnati *Down 12.2 percent*
- Toledo *Down 18.4 percent*
- Louisville *Down 9.2 percent*
- Detroit *Down 5.9 percent*
- Madison, WI *Down 5.2 percent*
- Chicago Midway *Down 12.4 percent*
- Kansas City *Down 15.9 percent*

In general, passengers departing from Indianapolis should have no problem finding flights to the most popular destinations in this market, which include: Orlando, Tampa, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Phoenix, New York, Ft. Myers, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Denver.

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