

U.S. Department of the Interior

DOI TRAVEL NEWSLETTER

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IN THE NEWS

More Airlines Offering On-line Check-in

More and more airlines are now offering on-line check-in. United Airline travelers with e-tickets can check in at united.com and print a boarding pass so they can go straight to the gate upon arrival at the airport. Other airlines that have on-line check-in include American, US Airways, Delta, America West, Song, and Alaska Airlines.

Paper Ticket Fees Increase

The paper ticket fee applies ONLY if a traveler chooses a paper ticket when an e-ticket is available for that flight. Effective June 13, 2003, a \$50 fee will be collected for all Continental Airlines tickets that are e-ticket eligible. Effective June 17, 2003, a \$50 fee will be collected for all US Airways tickets that are e-ticket eligible.

Using Mobile Phones and Blackberries on the Plane

Continental and American Airlines consent to using



mobile phones and Blackberries until the door is shut just prior to take off and while the plane is taxiing to the terminal after landing. The FAA is currently studying whether or not cell phone use in flight really affects the plane's navigational equipment. The current ban is a Federal Communications Commission rule, and is supported by the FAA. The study shows technology has changed, aircraft systems have improved, and new devices use frequencies that reside in areas of the radio spectrum far from aircraft systems. The results of the FAA study are due in November.

Dine at Your Own Expense

Delta is offering a new menu (from Mediterranean chicken to New York cheesecake) and hoping travelers will pay for it. Delta's new

meals cost up to \$10 and are in test mode on 400 flights. You can pay with cash or credit card (using a wireless card reader). First class passengers and some frequent fliers will not be charged for the meals. The food could be offered on all flights if the test goes well. Northwest Airlines has had a meals-for-sale program since January, and has expanded the service to 64 flights. The meals, ranging from \$5 to \$10, include breakfast breads and fruit, cold sandwiches and salads. American Airlines is in preliminary talks with vendors about selling food at airport gates. US Airways and America West Airlines also sell food on some flights. Continental is publicizing the fact that it has not reduced food service as much as its competitors. One airline that will not sell food is Southwest.

Decline in American Airlines Flights

American Airlines has announced that it is decreasing planes, routes and airport presence throughout its system. The airline is in the process of shedding more than 100 aircraft.

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Data Sources for DOI Travel Newsletter: Much of the travel industry information contained in this newsletter was obtained from public domain sources such as newspapers and the Internet, and was current at the time of publication. Travel industry information is provided solely for the use and information of DOI employees.

IN THE NEWS



Some Aircraft are Leaving Gate Early to Improve On-time Performance

Airlines are making a strong effort to improve their on-time performance ratings. Some airlines close the door and back off the ramp 5 minutes before scheduled departure. The planes then sit 10 feet away from the gate for another 10 minutes prior to taxiing off. By backing off the gate early they are clocked as an on-time departure even though the plane sits for an extra 10 minutes. Arrive at the airport early to avoid missing your flight.

Airline Legroom

American Airlines will give passengers the lower prices they want, but will take away the extra legroom. In 2000, the airline went to great expense to remove several rows of seats from each plane, giving coach passengers two to three extra inches of legroom. This fall, the airline will reduce legroom between seats by three inches. In contrast, starting in September jetBlue will add an extra two inches of legroom to two thirds of its seats. While the first nine rows (ahead of the emergency exits) of jetBlue's A-320's will only sport the standard 32 inches of pitch, the rest of the plane will get a roomy 34 inches.

In-Flight E-Mail on All U.S. Domestic Flights

United Airlines plans to be the first airline to offer two-way e-mail capability aboard all its domestic flights. By the end of the year, passengers on all U.S. flights will be able to use their laptops to transmit e-mails. United has offered its service on a trial basis since December (instant messaging, one-way text messaging and select news, weather and other information). It is now expanding with e-mail, which enables passengers to send and receive e-mail, including attachments. The glitch is the speed of the connection to the ground. It is only 9k. Continental also intends to begin two-way e-mail by mid-July. United and Continental are not first with the e-skies concept. Lufthansa, Japan Airlines, British Airways and Scandinavian Airlines System are all trying out or have committed to using a satellite high-speed Internet service.

Summer Brings Airport Delays

Many travelers are reporting that at many major airports the time to clear security is approaching 2 hours or more. Clearing security is becoming a nightmare as summer travel hits full stride. At the same time, TSA has announced that 6,000 airport security screeners are being cut. This is causing major slowdowns.

Alternate Airports Can Save Lots of Money

Did you know alternate airports usually offer lower prices? For example, if you are traveling from the Washington, DC area, flights may be full and fares may

Table 1

One-Way Contract Fares		
Washington DC Area	Denver, Colorado	City Pair
BWI Airport	Denver	\$355
Reagan National Airport	Denver	\$167
Dulles International Airport	Denver	\$422
Washington DC Area	Houston, Texas	City Pair
BWI Airport	Hobby Airport	\$169
BWI Airport	Houston Intercontinental	\$131
Reagan National Airport	Hobby Airport	\$260
Reagan National Airport	Houston Intercontinental	\$318
Dulles International Airport	Hobby Airport	\$309
Dulles International Airport	Houston Intercontinental	\$318
Washington DC Area	Chicago, Illinois	City Pair
BWI Airport	O'Hare International Airport	\$138
BWI Airport	Midway Airport	\$79
Reagan National Airport	O'Hare International Airport	\$89
Reagan National Airport	Midway Airport	\$94
Dulles International Airport	O'Hare International Airport	\$317
Dulles International Airport	Midway Airport	\$205

vary. There are three airports close by that may offer different airfares. They include: Baltimore Washington International; Ronald Reagan National Airport, and Washington Dulles International Airport. *Table 1* shows some examples from the Washington, DC area to Denver, Houston, and Chicago.

Changes in Processing Airline Ticket Voids

Recently, the rules have changed for voiding/canceling an airline ticket. The rule change applies to all tickets issued by the Airline Reporting Corporation (ARC) on any and all issuers of airline tickets. Prior to June 4, 2003, travel agencies had the ability to void tickets within the same week after issuance, consistent with the weekly reporting deadline for ARC. For example, you

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could call the Travel Management Center (TMC) within the same week that a ticket was issued and they could void/cancel that ticket without any airline penalties/charges. Effective June 4, 2003, ARC began enforcing a new policy whereby travel agencies have only a 24-hour window of opportunity to void or cancel a ticket after issuance without an airline-imposed penalty. For instance, if a ticket is issued on a Monday you must void/cancel by Tuesday at midnight. If a ticket is issued on a Tuesday you must void/cancel by Wednesday at midnight. The only exception is for weekends and national holidays. In those cases if your ticket is issued on a Friday, it can still be voided/canceled on Monday. Also, if the next business day is a national holiday there is one additional day to void/cancel a ticket.

Potentially, this change could increase costs substantially. At the top of the list are non-refundable tickets with added fees and unused tickets. Contract city pair flights are fully refundable, however, all changes after the first 24-hours of issuance will institute a charge and a credit for your ticket to your travel charge card. It takes up to two billing cycles for the credit to be applied. Remember each time an issued ticket requires a change, and the change is not completed within 24 hours, an additional transaction fee will be charged.

As a Traveler, What Do I Need To Do?

Don't Obtain Your Tickets Too Far in Advance

You should not, as a general rule, book tickets more than a month in advance.

Review Your Itinerary Immediately

This new restriction means that whenever the TMC faxes or e-mails the confirmation of an airline ticket you will need to review it immediately! The TMC used to have some leeway to fix a mistake. The "wobble room" is now gone and any mistake needs to be corrected immediately. Previously, the TMC was occasionally able to secure a waiver

from a particular airline, however, all ARC carriers advised that effective June 4 they will no longer consider such requests.

Speak Directly to a TMC Travel Agent When Changes Are Necessary

If you need to change/cancel/void a ticket within this one-day period, please do not send an e-mail or leave a message on voice mail. If there were a glitch in the system, and the TMC missed a deadline, it would be an expensive mistake. Please make sure you discuss your change with one of the TMC travel agents. Be sure to call within the 24-hour window.

Use Contract City Pair Fares and Refundable Fares

Use contract city pair fares, when available. If a contract city pair fare is not available, purchase a refundable fare.

Airline Ticket Refund Procedures

It has probably happened to you or someone you know. Reservations for travel are processed, and suddenly the trip is cancelled or changed due to an unforeseen "on-the-job" or personal crisis. Steps you need to take.



- Electronic Ticket Refund. If you purchased an electronic ticket, contact Omega World Travel (OWT) immediately to request an electronic ticket refund. Once the request for a refund is announced, OWT will enter the refund data on a refund report for the Airline Reporting Corporation (ARC). ARC will send all refund documents to

the reserving airline. The airline will process the credit. The credit will appear on the traveler's Bank of America travel charge card statement within two billing cycles of cancellation.

- Paper Ticket Refund. If you purchased a paper ticket, send the unused paper ticket to the OWT office that initially issued the ticket, and request a refund. The refund cannot be processed until the paper ticket is received by OWT. When the paper ticket is received by OWT, the refund data is entered on a refund report. The refund report is submitted to ARC. ARC sends all refund documents to the reserving airline. The airline processes the credit amount. The credit appears on the traveler's Bank of America travel charge card statement within two billing cycles of cancellation.

If the traveler does not follow these procedures, some of the unused tickets will be refunded automatically through the use of MegaCatch, a system designed to sweep the airlines, checking for unused refundable electronic tickets. The MegaCatch tool does not exist for all airlines nor for paper tickets. The Department will not receive a refund for the remaining tickets and the cost of the ticket will be absorbed by the airline. In an ongoing attempt to cut travel costs, all refunds should be presented to OWT. Generally there is a one-year window for refunds, but it is best to act quickly so the Department's money is not otherwise engaged with the airlines.

Remember unused refundable tickets are worth money!!

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The Official Web Site of the President's E-Government Initiatives

E-Travel Initiative Update

The General Service Administration (GSA) introduced the E-Travel Initiative, one of the Bush administrations E-Government projects. The E-Travel initiative is a governmentwide, web-based, end-to-end travel management system. The objective is to automate and consolidate travel processes tracking travel planning, authorization, reservations, payment of travel claims, submit/fulfill vouchers for reimbursement, and voucher reconciliation. Both travelers and travel planners will be able to prepare and submit travel information electronically through a PC, laptop, or handheld electronic device—anytime, anywhere. On-line budget information, standardized audit reports and expedited approvals will be possible. This system will control administrative, financial and information technology best practices to realize significant cost savings and improved employee productivity.

The E-Travel Service will be commercially hosted to minimize technology investments for the government and guarantee state-of-the-art functionality. GSA officials expect to award an E-travel contract in mid-August 2003. A recent FTR amendment requires agencies to begin a rollout in the 2004-2006 time frame.

Trip Manager's Corner

DOI travelers continue to increase the use of Trip Manager. DOI achieved 4,668 air segments, 712 car and 498 hotel rentals in May and 3,894 air segments, 635 car and 402 hotel rentals in June. Training has been ongoing in many Bureaus. Thanks DOI Travelers!!

What would you say if I told you that you could click on a website; view all air, hotel, car options; reserve the selections that suit your needs; and comply with Government travel policy without speaking to a travel agent? Well, that is exactly what you can do with Trip Manager, the Department's choice for online booking. This is the opening chapter for the web based travel transition.

Trip Manager remembers what cities you usually go to, what hotels you like to stay in, what size car you prefer and the special airline meals you order. In most cases, Trip Manager will provide opportunity for seat selection. Trip Manager is paperless, simple and saves money (only \$ 10.50 per transaction).

The system ensures compliance with city pair contracts, fire safety rules and MTMC agreement participants by placing a "G" icon by those fares/rates. The Bureau System Administrators for Trip Manager, as well as the TMC "Trip Manager Desk," provides customer support for the system.

The General Services Administration (GSA) has encouraged increased usage of online booking services. Promoting online booking is part of the Bush administration's e-government initiative. Bureau Trip Manager Administrators have been busy training employees how to use Trip Manager. Some Department employees are very familiar with Trip Manager and have been using it for over two years.

Remember, you must complete your Omega World Travel profile prior to using Trip Manager.

Emergency Incident Travel Contacts

This is the season when extreme fire conditions exist, especially in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Kansas, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming. In anticipation of the high priority service required during this season, OWT has provided contacts to be used ONLY for Emergency Firefighting and other National Emergencies. For immediate emergency incident travel planning after hours, please call 866-785-5875.

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OWT Airline Ticket Data

The following table shows updated OWT airline ticket data.

OWT Airline Ticket Data		
May 2002 – May 2003		
	Tickets Issued	Dollar Value (in millions)
May	18,923	6.49
June	13,180	5.72
Jul	17,487	6.24
Aug	15,428	6.69
Sep	14,661	4.69
Oct	18,406	6.77
Nov	14,273	4.61
Dec	7,453	3.16
Jan	13,609	5.50
Feb	13,460	5.44
Mar	14,468	5.80
Apr	14,577	5.88
May	13,185	5.53
TOTAL	189,110	\$73.0

Travel Contacts and Web Sites:

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Omega World Travel: Jackie Boley,
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703.359.0200, ext.369

TMC Comments and Feedback Form:
www.doi.gov/pfm/tmc/feedback.html

DOI Online Quality Assurance Form:
www.doitravel.com/online_survey.html

DOI Travel Profile:
https://profiler.owt.net/doi_2001

TripManager:
www.tripmanager.com/doi

Omega World Travel
www.doitravel.com

DOI Travel Policy
www.doi.gov/pfm/travel.html

This newsletter is available on the Internet at:
www.doi.gov/pfm/travel_newsletter