

The Latest Summer Air Travel Trends

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The Trends Shaping Summer Air Travel

Air travel rebounded significantly last summer with U.S. airlines carrying as many as 674 million passengers in 2021, which was 82.5 percent more compared to the pandemic-plagued 2020 (369 million). ValuePenguin recently analyzed 2021 data from the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) for the 100 largest airports in the U.S. to reveal some summer air travel trends to watch for in 2022. Naturally, most airports across the nation saw arrivals surge in the summer months compared to the remainder of the year but the data shows that these spikes vary from destination to destination and that the summer boom can also include significant flight delays.

The remarkable demand for air travel combined with staffing shortages and other factors have already led many airlines to cut their schedules in anticipation of disruptions. Therefore, travelers will want to understand the latest trends in summer air travel to avoid potential pitfalls in 2022.

Get Ready for the Summer Travel Boom

According to BTS data from last year analyzed by ValuePenguin, average passenger arrivals were 39 percent higher during the summer compared to the rest of the year across the 100 largest airports in the U.S. What's more, the vast majority of airports (97 of the 100) reported stronger June, July and August 2021 arrivals than the other nine months of the year.

The Hottest Destinations for Summer Air Travel

Myrtle Beach International Airport saw the largest increase in summertime arrivals last year, registering a whopping 147 percent increase in passenger arrivals in summer 2021 compared to the rest of the year. Multiple airports in Florida and Hawaii also saw increases of at least 50 percent during the busy summer months compared to the remainder of the calendar.

After Myrtle Beach, Florida's Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport (122 percent) and Alaska's Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (114 percent) saw the largest summertime increases in arrivals, followed by Maine's Portland International Jetport (104 percent) and Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport (92 percent) in Montana.

The Airports Experiencing a Summer Dropoff

Only three of the 100 airports analyzed saw a summer decline in arriving passengers last year. Southern California's Palm Springs International Airport experienced the biggest summertime dip, with a 32 percent decrease in arrivals for the months of June, July and August compared to the rest of the year. Southwest Florida International Airport in Fort Myers and Palm Beach International Airport also had summer slumps in

2021.

The Airports Hit Hardest by Summer Flight Delays

Florida airports struggled the most with summertime delays last year. St. Pete-Clearwater International, Punta Gorda and Orlando Sanford International recorded the highest average percentage of flights delayed in the summer months at 43-45 percent. Among the 10 airports with the biggest jumps in summertime arrivals, however, Florida's Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport had the highest percentage of flight delays during the summer season with an average of 32 percent of arrivals at delayed at least 15 minutes.

