

Travel Gossiper

September 2010

Hotels pay for Baggage Fees

Hoping to cash in on a common traveler complaint, some hotel companies are offering to pay for the checked-baggage fees charged by some U.S. airlines. Kimpton Hotels and chains run by [InterContinental Hotels Group](#), including [Holiday Inn](#), introduced the promotion to spur weekend and leisure business.

Although hotel companies are showing signs of recovery, the industry has undergone a rough two-year downturn, marked by cutbacks in business travel, meetings and conventions, and shorter-stay vacations. Hotels have been aggressive in introducing deals, including deep discounts and third-night-free offerings. But refunding bag fees is a marketing tactic aimed at generating goodwill on an issue that has ignited a firestorm.

The deal targets leisure travelers and vacationers. Most business travelers prefer carry-ons, and road warriors are often elite members of frequent-flier programs and not subject to bag-check fees. "Paying for checked-bag fees to generate room nights is much less expensive than the premiums hotels are paying to entice business," says industry consultant Peter Yesawich of Ypartnership. "As a promotional device, it makes good business sense." [Read More](#)

Grand Canyon's future at 'grave risk,' report says

Haze blurs the skies over the Grand Canyon, tour planes break the backcountry silence, uranium mines are making a comeback near the canyon's rim and the Colorado River has lost its muddy mojo. Add to those threats a perpetually underfunded budget and the picture that emerges is a national park where efforts to protect resources are increasingly compromised, a conservation group said Monday.

In an 80-page "State of the Parks" report, the National Parks Conservation Association analyzed the most serious threats to the Grand Canyon. Some come from outside the park, such as air pollution that blankets the region and future mining operations that could contaminate water flowing downstream into the canyon. [Read More](#)

Destination of the Month

Tahiti



French Polynesia's main island of Tahiti (meaning 'the gathering place') stands sentinel over her surrounding sisters like a proud queen, her soaring interior mountains sheltering deep valleys, plummeting waterfalls and crystal streams flowing down to the rugged coastline of black and white sand beaches and blue lagoons. Tahiti is made up of two islands, Tahiti-Nui and Tahiti-Iti, joined by a narrow isthmus.

The island's best white sand beaches are between Punaauia and Papara, but most visitors get more of a thrill out of visiting the famed black sand beaches on the east coast, particularly renowned Pointe Venus. Besides enjoying the seaside, Tahiti also offers some interesting sightseeing, including magnificent Botanical gardens, museums, archaeological sites, the tomb of the royal family Pomare, a lake containing unique eared eels, lava tubes, and a host of other unusual experiences.

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Family-Only section on flights

Most consumers would like a families-only section on flights, according to a poll released Tuesday by a travel website.

Nearly 60% of more than 2,000 travelers polled by Skyscanner, a fare-comparison website, say they want airlines to create such a section. In addition, nearly 20% said they'd prefer child-free flights.

Skyscanner posted the poll on its site Aug. 11-23, after a confidential settlement last month between [Qantas](#) and a 67-year-old American passenger who sued the Australian airline after a 3-year-old screamed on her flight last year. The woman complained of excruciating pain in her ears and was taken to a hospital before the Darwin-bound flight departed from [Alice Springs](#).

Most poll respondents in favor of creating a families-only section said they don't have young children and "want to sit as far away as possible" from them. [Read More](#)

Amputees worry about airport security screening

Eileen Casey doesn't want to travel by air anymore, because security personnel at some airports require her to be screened by an X-ray device for passengers with prosthetic limbs.

Casey, a former competitive swimmer, says she lost her right leg from radiation treatments for a skin condition in the 1970s before the dangers of the treatment were understood.

"It's ironic to lose my leg to a radiation overdose, and now, if I want to travel, I have to expose myself to more radiation," says the Burlington, Vt., resident.

Many people with prosthetic limbs complain about the CastScope, a screening device, that uses backscatter X-ray technology to identify security threats concealed in a prosthetic, cast or bandage. They say they're concerned about



Travel Tip of the Month

Keep It Up to Date!

Make sure your passport is up to date. The last thing you want to happen is watching your friends board the plane while you're stuck at home squandering the amazing travel deals you found for yourself and friends. They will not let on you the plane with an expired passport.

radiation exposure, the length of time it takes to be screened and a lack of qualified personnel operating the devices.

In June, the Amputee Coalition of America expressed its concerns about the CastScope and called on the Transportation Security Administration to "clean up its act" when screening people who've lost a limb. The group, which has about 5,300 members, says a survey of 7,300 amputees finds they've been subjected to "inconsistent, unfair, abusive and often embarrassing screenings" by TSA personnel. [Read More](#)