

BURKHALTER TRAVEL NEWS: DECEMBER 2017

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LATEST NEWS

- **“Smart suitcases” are drawing scrutiny on some airlines.** Smart luggage offers travelers features such as bag tracking and USB ports---and they are expected to be popular holiday gifts. Effective January 15, 2018, Delta and American say 'smart' luggage batteries must be removed if the suitcase is to be brought on board. United is considering a similar ban, and others might follow. If the lithium-ion battery can't be removed, the bags can't be checked or brought onboard. Check with your carrier(s) for their take on smart suitcase rules.
- If you're traveling with holiday gifts this month, note this message from the TSA: **“Wrapped gifts are allowed, but not encouraged.**We might have to unwrap gifts. If there's something in the gift that needs to be inspected, we may have to open it. Our officers try their best not to mangle the gift wrap, but it's not a guarantee and it also slows down the line for everybody else.”
- **The TSA wants to be your Facebook friend!** They shared the news after Thanksgiving with this chatty message: “We launched a Facebook page yesterday! While our page is currently bare as turkey bones after Thanksgiving dinner, the account will promote TSA initiatives and provide news, videos and other updates. [Like us!](#)”
- The TSA also asked us to share this: **“Children younger than 12** can keep their shoes on when going through security.”
- You're probably familiar with the concept of **“automatic tipping”** at restaurants, especially with large groups. The practice is spreading, to hotels, airport skycaps, and other places frequented by travelers who might not notice the “gotcha” fee tacked on to a credit card purchase. Read more [here](#).
- Weight limits on luggage for airlines, which are being more rigorously enforced than ever, are fueling the trend toward packing tiny stuff. "The restrictions are making people think about packing lighter," says Paul Shrater, co-founder of [Minimus.biz](#), a Newbury Park, CA site that specializes in travel-size items.
- **Brazil has launched the "Electronic Visitor Visa Program - E-VISA"** for citizens of the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Japan. The Brazilian e-visa will be available starting Jan. 25, 2018, for U.S. citizens; and Jan. 18 for Canadians. The cost is U.S. \$40 (non-refundable), a quarter of the fee charged for U.S. passport holders applying for the traditional visa through a consulate. It will be valid for up to two years, but for only a maximum of 90 days per year.

AIRLINE UPDATES

ALASKA AIRLINES

- **HEADS UP** if you're traveling on Alaska Airlines this **Friday, December 15**: In celebration of National Ugly Holiday Sweater Day, Alaska Airlines guests who wear their festive holiday sweaters to the airport can board early. The one-day promotion will be celebrated by flyers and employees across Alaska's 115-city network and includes all Alaska, Virgin America and Horizon Air flights. Festive holiday-themed boarding music will play all month long to help get guests into the holiday spirit.
- Alaska has launched 44 routes this year, which continue to develop according to forecasts. The company anticipates it will grow about 7.2 percent this year. As the airline looks ahead to 2018, it's planning for nearly 8 percent network growth by adding capacity in primarily existing markets. Redeploying aircraft and crews will help the airline support the growth.

AMERICAN AIRLINES

- American Airlines recently began upgrading its passenger service at Connecticut's Tweed-New Haven Airport, replacing its 37-seat Dash 8 turboprop planes with 50-seat CRJ-200 regional jets. Company officials say the upgraded service represents an "improved and more seamless passenger experience for customers and is a demonstration of American's commitment to their growing market."
- American will add five more cities to its list of destinations from **Chicago O'Hare International** Airport, including Vancouver and Calgary in Canada. Other new destinations are South Carolina's Charleston and Myrtle Beach; and Bangor, Maine.
- Beginning in February, American Airlines will add a second flight from Iowa's Sioux Gateway Airport to the carrier's hub at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport.
- American is also adding flights in Maine. Beginning April 3, it will add two daily Portland-New York/LaGuardia flights. On June 9, it will launch a weekly run between Bangor and Chicago/O'Hare. Both routes will be flown with one-class regional jets.

DELTA AIR LINES

- Delta Air Lines claimed a record-setting seventh year at the top of Business Travel News's annual airline survey of corporate travel managers and agents, once again steamrolling its competition and earning the top score in every category by a healthy margin. Across the 20 years that BTN has conducted its survey, Delta now stands alone as the winningest carrier.

- **Delta SkyMiles** members take note: Starting April 1, Delta is upgrading some flights on long-haul domestic routes to Delta One service, including those between Atlanta and Minneapolis to Honolulu. Complimentary upgrades to domestic Delta One will *not* follow standard rules. Upgrades will be awarded only on the day of departure.
- **Delta Air Lines** and **Korean Air** have received U.S. approval for a joint-venture operation routing transpacific connecting traffic through Korean Air's **Seoul** hub.

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

- A spokeswoman for Southwest Airlines said the carrier was "in the process of reviewing our policies and considering changes" in response to Delta and United's upcoming ban on "smart suitcases" containing lithium ion batteries. If they follow suit, batteries must be removed before bring the equipped luggage onboard OR before checking it. In general, if the battery cannot be removed, it will not be allowed on the aircraft.
- Southwest Airlines Facilities Maintenance Technicians, represented by the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA), ratified their first collective bargaining agreement. The new five-year contract includes a complete set of work rules, wage scale, ratification bonus, and job protections.
- Southwest and five-time GRAMMY® Award nominee Khalid have embarked on "a journey to bring fans even closer" with exclusive content and a few surprises in cities along the way. The program kicked off on Dec. 4, when Southwest and Khalid showed California some love at a special, free concert for fans and Southwest Customers in San Jose, CA. The venue reached capacity well before doors opened, with a packed crowd spilling around the corner just to catch a glimpse of the platinum-selling RCA Records recording artist.

UNITED AIRLINES

- Beginning in June 2018, United will add daily nonstop flights between Chicago O'Hare and Fresno Yosemite International Airport in California.
- The carrier will also add new service to El Paso and Fresno from Chicago O'Hare; Jacksonville from Denver; Kalispell, Medford, Missoula and Redmond from Los Angeles; and Elmira from Newark in April and June 2018, FlightGlobal schedules show.
- In international route developments, United will start using high-density 777s on some Europe routes.
- United is included in a long list of carriers (most of them international) that will not allow those popular holiday "crackers and poppers" onboard. The carrier list—domestic and international---prohibiting them is so long, it's best to leave them at home.

INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES

- **Aer Lingus** will launch four times a week service from Dublin to Philadelphia starting in March 2018. The carrier already offers connections to New York JFK, Hartford, Newark, Boston, Washington, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Orlando, Miami and Toronto.
- **Lufthansa** won't start flying new Boeing 777-9s for another three years, but it recently revealed some details of its new business class for those aircraft, and the cabin has some unique innovations. Look for details [here](#).
- When **Lufthansa** announced its recently-launched **New York JFK-Berlin service** (taking over for the defunct Airberlin), it said the route would be turned over next summer to **Eurowings**, its fast-growing, leisure-oriented subsidiary. Now it has even more transatlantic plans for Eurowings. The carrier will start a new route between [JFK and Dusseldorf](#) starting April 28, using a Brussels Airlines A340-300 to operate six flights a week.
- **Alitalia** is resuming two routes to **Africa**, which will mean more connections via Rome for U.S. travelers. There will be four weekly flights to Johannesburg beginning April 8 and four to Nairobi beginning March 28.
- **Ethiopian Airlines** says that it is headed to **Chicago/O'Hare**. The Star Alliance carrier says it will begin nonstop flights to its hub in **Addis Ababa** in June. The airline hasn't released any other details.
- **Air Canada** has opened a new private lounge in **Toronto**. Called the Signature Suite, it's located in Terminal 1. The 160-seat club will serve meals in three separate dining rooms. Access to the Signature Suite will be limited to Air Canada's *paid* international business class flyers.
- When a **Hainan Airlines** Boeing 787 landed Nov. 21 at Chicago O'Hare, it marked its successful first international biofuels flight. The GEnx engines on the 13-hour flight, HU497, between Beijing and Chicago, were powered by a mix of jet fuel and a biofuel derived from used cooking oil.
- Travel writer Chris McGinnis reports on his recent flight from San Francisco to Hong Kong onboard **Cathay Pacific's new Airbus A350**, flight 893. Read his trip review, including cabin-by-cabin photos [here](#).
- **International carriers** are **cutting the size of first class cabins**. Among them: **Singapore Airlines** will cut the number of first class cabins in half on A380s. Right now, there are 12 suites. When the reconfiguration is complete, each of the carrier's eventual fleet of nineteen A380s will have six first class suites. **Emirates** unveiled the new [first class suites on its Boeing 777s](#). They are not as large as the Singapore Airlines' suites and have a traditional seat-into-bed arrangement. Emirates also confirmed when similar suites are installed on its Airbus A380s, the seat count will drop to 11 from the current 14.

AIRPORT NEWS

- A new analysis of Customs and Immigration **waiting times** for travelers arriving at U.S. airports had some bad news for Bay Area travelers: **San Francisco International** ranks among the nation's worst, and lines at **Mineta San Jose International** are getting longer instead of shorter.
- **Priority Pass** continues to pick up additional airport clubs and expand its in-airport dining perk. New lounges include the Plaza Premium Lounge in **Toronto** near U.S. departures in Terminal 3; two clubs in Mexico (**Monterrey** and **Puebla**); and the Virgin Atlantic Clubhouse in Terminal 2 at **Los Angeles International**. (Beware: Priority Pass access to the LAX lounge is limited to the hours of 5 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.) And cardholders now receive a \$28 credit at the Kentucky Ale Taproom in **Lexington, Kentucky**.
- **Pret A Manger**, the British prepared-food chain, will be coming to airports and railroad stations thanks to a deal with Autogrill, the huge global food-service company. The first two airport/railroad Prets open next year in **Copenhagen**, and they **will be coming to U.S. airports** too. You can also find several of their shops in a few key cities in the U.S. Check them out [here](#).
- **Denver's Stapleton International Airport** was decommissioned in 1995, and at least a part of it, an abandoned air traffic control tower building, has been resurrected as a trendy restaurant and bar named the **Punch Bowl Social**. In addition to a dining venue and bar, the Punch Bowl Social brings arcade games, karaoke and bowling to the disused building. The complex retains the original tower (which is not open to the public) and uses much of the former exterior of the building on the inside. Look for details [here](#).

HOTEL UPDATES

- A number of hotel companies have been partnering with online food ordering services to **provide guests with an alternative to room service**. Earlier this year **Hawthorn Suites** by Wyndham, Wyndham Hotel Group's extended stay brand, enlisted chefs to come up with recipes for guests to cook in their rooms. Wyndham launched a pilot program letting guests get groceries delivered to their rooms from Instacart and Peapod. **Hyatt Centric** has also partnered with Grubhub to let guests order from restaurants selected by hotel employees. More [here](#).
- **Best Western International** has opened nine locations in Asia so far this year, with plans to open two hotels in Indonesia before the end of December.
- The **JW Marriott Nashville**, **The Joseph** and a **W Hotel** are examples of luxury hotels coming to Tennessee. Nashville is set to double the number of luxury rooms to 2,344 when the hotels are completed.

- **IHG Rewards** Spire Elite members are now offered check-in times as early as 10 a.m. The benefit is not guaranteed, however. It's based on availability.
- **Hyatt** has opened its first **Andaz** in Southeast Asia. The 342-room property in **Singapore** is located at 5 Fraser Street. **Marriott** opened two **Moxy** hotels in Japan. The 205-room **Tokyo** branch is near Kotobashi Park in the Kinshicho district. The 155-room **Osaka** Moxy is near Honmachi station. Marriott's **Le Meridien** brand has taken over the 336-room former Ritz-Carlton in the Gangnam district of **Seoul, South Korea**.
- **Hilton** continues to expand its limited-service concept across the U.S. An 87-room **Home2 Suites** opened in Lake Charles, Louisiana. A 114-room **Homewood Suites** opened in Center Valley, Pennsylvania. And the dual-branded **Hilton Garden Inn** and Home2 Suites has opened at 7200 S. Price Road in Tempe, Arizona.
- **Marriott** has opened two **Four Points** hotels in **Africa**. A 172-room branch opened in the main complex of Kenyatta International Airport in **Nairobi** and a 106-room property opened in **Arusha, Tanzania**.

TOOLS, TIPS AND TECHNOLOGY

- Apparently some hotels in New York City have introduced "**urban destination fees**," which are hovering **around \$25 per night** on top of the regular room rate. In many cases, the fee might include extras like free local telephone calls, a food and beverage credit and Wi-Fi, but in other cases, it is strictly an add-on to reflect "the hotels' proximity to a 'tourist attraction.'" Travel expert Gary Leff, who [first reported the story](#) about the New York fees, called it "the dumbest hotel fee I've ever seen."
- Everyone loves a **restaurant dining room with a view**, whether it's looking at the Manhattan skyline from New York City's legendary Rainbow Room, the stunning waters of the San Francisco Bay from The Caprice in Tiburon, Calif., or the bucolic acreage surrounding the Wyebrook Farm Market and Café in Honey Brook, Pa. These spots are among Open Table's [100 Most Scenic Restaurants in America](#), as determined by the opinions in more than 5 million reviews of more than 20,000 restaurants around the country.
- Airlines continually tweak the order in which they board passengers. They've tried everything from a free-for-all to window-seats-and-back-of-plane first, to random boarding. For travelers, **it's all about overhead bin space**. If you're the last to board, then the chances increase that you'll have to gate-check your carry-on bag as the bins get filled by those who boarded ahead of you. Here's an in-depth look at [how several airlines board passengers](#).

BURKHALTER TOURS

*Our Burkhalter Tours staff is wrapping up another successful year of exciting--and affordable--travel experiences, from Iceland to Antarctica and just about everywhere in between. Tour itineraries for 2018 are solidly in place and filling fast! Click [here](#) for a quick look at just some of the exciting 2018 offerings (this site is added to and updated regularly) and click [here](#) for a link to the monthly Burkhalter Tours Newsletter. 2018 will be another year of adventure, learning, once-in-a-lifetime experiences, and fun. We invite you to join us as we travel the world. **FROM ALL OF US:** Very best wishes to you and your family for a wonderful holiday season and a successful 2018.*

NEW ENGLAND AUTUMN SPLENDOR - October 6 - 14, 2018

An autumn leaf peeping tour in New England!---featuring Boston, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut and Rhode Island---is a delight for all the senses. The pallet of colorful mountain slopes in Vermont and New Hampshire, the crunch of leaves underfoot, the scent of clean, crisp air mingled with a touch of sea salt, the swoosh of ocean waves on Maine's rugged coast.....and, of course, the taste of freshly-caught lobster. Classic New England! This itinerary features Kennebunkport, Portland and a tour of Acadia National Park---and so much more. Travel along the spectacular Kancamagus Scenic Byway in New Hampshire and view Vermont's stunning Quechee Gorge. You'll enjoy scenic boat and train rides for the best views of Connecticut's splendid scenery. All this and time in historic Boston and picturesque Rhode Island too!

\$3,339 including air from Chicago, eight nights hotels, extensive sightseeing and great photo ops, several meals, a professional guide and driver, deluxe motorcoach, and lots more! See brochure details [here](#), call any Burkhalter office TODAY or e-mail [Burkhalter Tours](#). **FREE AIR if you BOOK BEFORE DEC. 31—save \$500!** Other Mayflower Tours discounts available! Ask for details.

SOUTH AFRICAN SAFARI ADVENTURE - September 9 - 20, 2018

Burkhalter Tours own world traveler, Kathy Brinkman, will host this once-in-a-lifetime bucket-list tour, an outstanding opportunity to experience the culture, history, wildlife and beauty of four South African countries. Discover the historic city of Johannesburg during a full-day tour. You'll stay in beautiful park lodges and embark on safari adventures in Kruger, Hwange and Chobe national parks in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana. Experience nature's supreme masterpiece, Victoria Falls and relax onboard a spectacular sunrise cruise on the mighty Zambezi River---and so much more. Add an optional 3-night extension to Cape Town!

\$7,459 including air from Chicago and intra-tour flights in Africa, 10 nights deluxe accommodations in safari lodges, 24 meals, sightseeing and game drives, experienced safari guide throughout your entire adventure, Burkhalter host with you from Madison (with a minimum of 15 travelers). See all the brochure details [here](#)...call any Burkhalter office TODAY or e-mail [Burkhalter Tours](#). **A discount is available**---ask for details. **Don't delay!**

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