

BURKHALTER TRAVEL NEWS: MAY 2017

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LATEST NEWS

- **THE LAPTOP BAN:** European Union and U.S. transport and security officials met in Brussels on Wednesday, May 17 to discuss U.S. plans to broaden an in-flight ban on laptops and tablets in aircraft cabins **to include flights from Europe**. A decision is pending. The original ban, announced in late March currently affects passengers traveling on nonstop flights to the U.S. from 10 airports in the Middle East and Africa. Electronic devices other than cell phones must be packed in checked luggage. A few airlines are offering loaner laptops for your inflight use.
- **An important note for corporate IT departments and legal teams:** Security experts recommend that **corporate business travelers should consult with key company advisors BEFORE departing on an international trip** that might be affected by the current and potential expanded ban of laptops and other devices in the aircraft cabin. Electronic devices that are relegated to checked luggage can be susceptible to theft or damage, and corporate documents could be at risk. Preemptively, a **corporate travel policy addendum** to guide travelers and define company expectations should be considered and widely circulated.
- Major U.S airlines have reaffirmed their commitment to their passengers by outlining enhanced **“customer-first” boarding policies**. See details that follow for changes at **Southwest, United and Delta**.
- The conversation continues about **cell phone inspections at airports** by U.S. Customs officials. Read about it [here](#)
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued new travel notices for **Belgium, Italy and Germany** due to **measles outbreaks** being reported in increased numbers. The **CDC recommends** that travelers to these countries protect themselves with a measles vaccine (note: this is especially important for infants and toddlers, though adults are susceptible as well).
- The big “terminal move” and **major relocation of airlines at Los Angeles International/LAX** has been underway since May 7 and MIGHT be completed by the time you read this. Or not. Because Delta is one of the most-affected by the move, you might want to review [their recommendations](#) on how to avoid problems. To help you **“re:LAX”** (their phrase) they offer onsite massages, cucumber water, a zone-out retreat in a meditation pod, hydrating mist, lavender water and Biscoff cookies.
- **United Airlines plans to “rebank” several of its hubs** later this year. Read about it in the United section that follows.

AIRLINE UPDATES

ALASKA AIRLINES

- Alaska Airlines and Virgin America will relocate and consolidate flight operations at New York JFK Terminal 7 by October, moving from their current locations at JFK's Terminal 8 and Virgin America from Terminal 4. The combined airline entity will join global partners British Airways, Qantas and Icelandair at Terminal 7.
- Alaska Airlines also plans to build a club at JFK Terminal 7, but it won't be ready until early 2018.
- Alaska Airlines maintained its decade-long run at the top of the annual J.D. Power customer service satisfaction survey of "traditional" North American carriers.

AMERICAN AIRLINES

- American will sell premium economy seats from Chicago to Paris. They are reportedly planning to put a 787-9 equipped with its new premium economy cabin into service this summer between [Chicago O'Hare and Paris](#). It's currently offered only on a few routes out of Dallas/Ft. Worth.
- American plans to add more seats to its new Boeing 737 Max planes. To achieve the "densification" (a term loosely meaning 'You'll be squished even more'), three rows on each of the new aircraft will have their pitch drop from 31 inches to 29 inches. The distance between seats in the remainder of the economy cabin will shrink to 30 inches. The decision to reduce pitch puts the carrier in a comfort category similar to low-cost airlines such as Frontier and Spirit, which have seats just 28 inches apart.

DELTA AIR LINES

- Routesonline.com says Delta plans to put a 757-200 with flat-bed Delta One seats into service on one of its daily [Boston-Minneapolis flights](#) starting January 3 of next year. And beginning this month through October, Delta will use the same aircraft on one of its three daily [New York JFK-Philadelphia](#) flights; the other two still use Endeavor Air regional jets.
- Delta said in a filing with the FAA that installing planned business class suites in its 777s will shrink passenger capacity in the front cabin from the current 37 lie-flat seats to 28 mini-suites with lie-flat seats. When the 777s are remade, they will continue to offer nine-across seating in economy instead of going to 10-across like some of its domestic and foreign competitors are doing with their 777s. (Finally! A move that enhances passenger comfort!)

- Delta hasn't yet issued a schedule for reconfiguring its 18 777-200s, but when it does, it will also give the planes 48 new premium economy seats and 220 economy seats. They currently have 36 extra-legroom Comfort+ coach seats and 220 regular economy seats.
- Delta passengers will soon be able to check bags via a facial recognition scanner that uses biometric technology to match their passport photos to their face. The new technology is the first of its kind in the U.S. and Delta hopes it will help both customers and airline agents save time during check-in. Delta has invested \$600,000 in 4 biometric self-service bag drop machines, which will be placed in **Minneapolis-St Paul International Airport** this summer, but only one will include the facial recognition software. Delta will then collect customer feedback to determine how and when it will expand it to other airports.
- Good news if Delta involuntarily bumps you off a flight. The word is that Delta gate agents are authorized to pay up to \$2,000 and supervisors can offer up to \$9,950.

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

- Southwest unseated long-time champion JetBlue among low-cost airlines in the annual J.D. Power customer service satisfaction survey
- After the widely-publicized United Airlines involuntary removal of a passenger from a flight, Southwest announced its intentions to stop its practice of overbooking flights. The change became **effective on May 8.**
- Southwest Airline's Rapid Rewards loyalty program has been named Program of the Year by the Freddie Awards, reportedly one of the travel loyalty industry's most trusted voices.

UNITED AIRLINES

- United Airlines has released a "Review and Action Report" stating 10 changes to its policies after the recent incident in which a passenger was forcibly removed from an aircraft. Among the actions taken by CEO Oscar Munoz to ensure that "the highest levels of customer service" are in place include: ensuring customers seated on the aircraft will not be subject to involuntary denied boarding, and the airline will not involve law enforcement unless in case of a safety or security issue. In addition, United enhanced its customer compensation policies.
- United Airlines is making a stand in California. While the carrier has been shrinking at Los Angeles/LAX, United continues to build its San Francisco/SFO hub. Previously announced flights to seven new cities start next month. And United says that in August it will add more flights on eight

routes and add larger aircraft on ten more runs, bringing United to about 300 daily departures from SFO.

- United plans to “re-bank” several of its hubs later this year in an effort to boost connectivity in its domestic network. The strategy, also called “peaking,” groups flights into busy flying times. This is a departure for United, which currently has unbanked hubs. United will begin the re-banking project at Houston George Bush Intercontinental, Washington Dulles International and Chicago O’Hare International airports later this year. For the traveler, it will mean less time between connecting flights.

INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES

- **Air China** apparently never started taking reservations on the **Los Angeles-Shenzen** service that it planned to start flying July 6, and the carrier has now [pulled the route from its schedule](#). Air China had planned to operate the service three times a week with a 787-9.
- **Copa Airlines** will launch a daily flight from **Denver to Panama City, Panama**, beginning on December 11. Copa's Star Alliance partner, United Airlines, briefly flew the route in 2014 and 2015.
- **Alitalia**, Italy’s flagship carrier, **filed for bankruptcy** on May 2 after workers rejected a restructuring offer from management. Under bankruptcy rules, the carrier has 180 days from May 2 to come up with a plan. On May 17, the Special Commissioners of the airline were scheduled to publish a tender for the sale of the airline, with offers to be opened in mid-June. Meanwhile, the Special Commissioners have agreed to pay the first installment of a bridge loan to allow the airline to operate normally. **Our advice:** Talk with your Burkhalter agent about how (ALWAYS book with a credit card) or whether to book flights on Alitalia.
- **Qatar Airways, Etihad and Emirates** all started offering laptop loaner programs to travelers more than a month ago. Last week **Turkish Airlines** started [a similar loaner program](#) for U.S.-bound business class flyers. It extended the offer to U.K.-bound flights on May 12.
- **Emirates will trim its Dubai-JFK non-stop schedule** from three flights a day to two effective June 4 through at least the end of June. The carrier also offers one-stop JFK-Dubai service via Milan.
- **The newest U.S. route for LOT Polish Airlines is Newark to Warsaw**, which it recently started flying four times a week with a two-class 767-300. It will upgrade the route to a three-class 787 in August, and boost frequencies to five a week.
- **Uzbekistan Airways recently announced flights from New York-Kennedy** with a once-weekly nonstop to Tashkent and once-weekly flights on a JFK-Riga, Latvia-Tashkent routing. Service is on a 787-8.

AIRPORT NEWS

- **Hawaii has renamed the Honolulu airport.** State officials have changed the name of Oahu's Honolulu International Airport to **Daniel K. Inouye International Airport** in honor of the former United States senator.
- **Hangzhou International Airport**, one of the major airports to serve China's Yangtze River Delta region announced it plans to become **the world's first "cashless airport."** According to the Global Times via Chinese-language publication ThePaper.cn, the airport plans to partner with leading providers such as AllPay so travelers can make cashless payments for all airport services.
- **Britain's "pay-as-you-go" airport lounges** were recently reviewed and **roundly criticized** for, among other things, their "low rent décor and bad food." There are dozens of the lounges in the UK and none of the 17 lounges visited during the review was awarded more than 3.5 stars out of five. The worst of all, Gatwick My Lounge North was criticized for its "grubby" floors, "unappetizing" food, and lack of power sockets for laptops. The most expensive options, Heathrow Skyteam T4 and Heathrow Aspire T5 were awarded just two stars. Gatwick No1 North and Manchester Aspire T1 earned just 2.5.
- **Anthony Bourdain**, the chef turned television travel celebrity, is on record as [hating airline food](#). But he has much kinder things to say about airport dining. "**Changi Airport in Singapore** has the best food," he said. "It has a hawker center for the employees that's open to the public. **Tokyo [Narita]** has a sushi bar right near the gates serving flights to the [United] States that's extraordinarily good for an airport sushi place."
- **New York's Kennedy Airport** is getting another upgrade. British Airways announced recently that it will spend \$65 million to remake its scruffy Terminal 7. The 18-month upgrade will include new lounges, new check-in areas including separate facilities for first and business class passengers, and new gate facilities and retail shops. You can look at BA's JFK promo video [here](#).
- In the past, the biggest and busiest U.S. airports had the market for international air service to themselves. Now, **smaller airports**, such as [Bradley International](#), near Hartford, Conn.; [T.F. Green Airport](#), near Providence; and [Stewart International Airport](#) in New York's Hudson Valley have been awarded some direct flights to Europe and a potentially profitable slice of the trans-Atlantic air service pie.
- Perhaps in a bid to calm the nerves of fearful flyers, a **prayer booth** has been installed at the **Stuttgart, Germany Airport**. It features 300 prayers from various religions in 65 languages.

HOTEL UPDATES

- If you're going to work out in a hotel gym, why not make it a **gym with a fabulous view**? [Here](#) are several dazzlers.
- **The airport in Frankfurt, Germany** has a new hotel. **Marriott** has opened a 305-room Moxy just off the airport grounds. The hotel doesn't have a free shuttle, though. You'll pay 5 euros for the short ride from the hotel to FRA's terminals.
- **Meeting planners and Green Bay Packer fans rejoice!** Three hotels now under construction in **Green Bay** will add nearly 400 rooms to the robust tourism trade. **Lodge Kohler** (scheduled to open in July), the **Hotel Northland** (expected to open this year) and **Home2 Suites** (scheduled to open by November) will add a combined 396 rooms to the 4,220 existing hotel rooms in the Green Bay area. A plan to build an 81-unit Staybridge Suites behind Brett Favre's Steakhouse would push the region's total to nearly 4,700 hotel rooms. That's still not enough to host a Super Bowl, which requires cities to have 30,000 rooms within an hour's drive.
- Are **popular lifestyle brands** like **West Elm, Restoration Hardware and Equinox** seguing into the boutique hotel business? Apparently so! Read about it [here](#).

TOOLS, TIPS AND TECHNOLOGY

- Confused about **programs to clear customs and immigration** briskly? The [Department of Homeland Security unveiled a web page](#) recently to remove some of the guesswork. The site describes the advantages each program provides and how much it costs.
- **Gogo's in-flight Wi-Fi**, powered by new modems and Intelsat IS32E satellites, is about to get much, much better, according to recent inflight tests by a group of business journalists. **American Airlines** has signed on for Gogo's new and faster 2Ku installation on 140 planes. Among the other airlines that will soon offer up to 100Mbps Wi-Fi in the air are **Aer Lingus, Air France, Air Canada, British Airways, GOL, Iberia, Japan Transoceanic Air, KLM, Virgin Atlantic, and Virgin Australia**. Gogo says that right now only one **Aeromexico** jet is flying with the newest next-gen 2Ku system but there are aggressive plans for installation on 1,600 planes by the end of 2018.
- So, if one U.S. dollar equals 22,683.50 Vietnamese dong, how much does this coffee cost? **With the [XE Currency app](#)**, you can skip the conversion math and keep track of exactly what you're spending.

BURKHALTER TOURS

It's no secret that Burkhalter Tours has been in business for a long time---decades, in fact!---and its skills at designing and delivering quality programs are well known among its many fans and frequent Tours travelers. This month's featured tours showcase exciting destinations and itineraries that are packed with highly memorable experiences. And isn't that why we travel? Read on....

NEW ENGLAND AUTUMN SPLENDOR - September 29 - October 7, 2017

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 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 Boston and Rhode Island too!

\$2,889 including air from Chicago, eight nights hotels, extensive sightseeing and great photo ops, several meals, a professional guide and driver, deluxe motorcoach. See brochure details [here](#), call any Burkhalter office TODAY or e-mail [Burkhalter Tours](#). **Ask us about Mayflower discounts!**

HOSTED WEEK IN PARIS - October 6 - 14, 2017

Join hosts Kathy Koritzinsky and Claire Kottenbeutel for a week of fun, surprises and exciting sightseeing in this magnificent European capital! These former foreign language teachers---they know and teach several---are fluent in French and have traveled to Paris many times. After your orientation of the city, you are free to set off in any direction that strikes your fancy. If you prefer guided sightseeing, Claire and Kathy will lead some private excursions or help you book tours to other places that might interest you. Whether you favor independence or want something more structured, this tour offers both! You'll love sharing this memorable journey with these experienced travelers whose love and admiration for France and its culture is truly contagious. And you'll learn some conversational French along the way!

\$2,599 including roundtrip air from Chicago, 7 nights first class hotel, several meals, orientation tour and advice from your hosts---this is a small group tour, so if you want to join in, don't wait! See brochure details [here](#), call any Burkhalter office TODAY or e-mail [Burkhalter Tours](#). **Want to extend your time in Paris or visit other parts of Europe? We can make that happen! Ask us for details and options.**

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6501 Mineral Point Road
608-833-5200/800-556-9286

Fitchburg

3050 Cahill Main
608-441-0151/888-522-4269

Stoughton

Chalet Travel, 226 S. Forrest
608-873-8133/800-733-6970

Madison East

615A North Sherman Avenue
608-241-7500/800-414-7166

Prairie du Sac

180 Washington Street
608-643-4599/800-242-8457

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Baraboo

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