

AIRLINES IN FEES AND CHARGES WAR WITH CUSTOMERS



A recently conducted survey by the Air Transport Users Council (AUC) showed how airlines tend to differ from each other in terms of the way they treat customers who have had to cancel their bookings. In the case of cheap non-refundable tickets, the case is clear and even the customers tend not to expect any kind of refund even the cancellation was not their fault.

It is not the price of the ticket which is in question. However, we are dealing with the issue of fees and charges attached to most bookings. Such fees can range from air passenger duty to even wheelchair tax. Most customers expect to get at least a portion of this money back.

In 2002, most European airlines agreed to a new EU code, outlining the prerogative to refund customers the above-mentioned fees and charges if not the price of the ticket. Nevertheless, most airlines do not publish nor advertise this possibility or refunding.

Indeed, it is sometimes not even worth claiming the charges back. Let's take an example: a passenger travelling from Leeds/Bradford to Alicante through Jet2 would, according to the airline rules and regulations, owe the airline L10.80 in the case of cancelling. This means that the ultimate gain on claiming money back would be minimal. It sometimes seems that the charges and fees are set in such a manner as to put passengers off claiming money back.

This is not, however, always the case. It was discovered during the survey that the friendliest of airlines in this field are the oldest ones. AirFrance, Alitalia and TAP Portugal were found to return all administration fees and taxes upon reasonable request. Meanwhile, a passenger cancelling a flight between New York and London through British Airways could expect to receive something like L130 back if to claim back charges.

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