

BRITISH TOP THE LENGTHY DELAY LIST



What is almost every airline passenger's nightmare and sometimes, as surveys have suggested, the reason why many choose to use land or water over air? The delayed flights. Nobody likes being late, especially when the outcome means being stranded at the airport. The bad news for passengers is that the Association of European Airlines has recently pointed out that 2007 was a record year for delays in the air traffic, indeed the 4th successive year of deterioration. Astonishingly, out of all European airlines studied, the association came to the conclusion that 22.7% of all departures are delayed by at least 15 minutes.

The news was not all that pessimistic as some central European airlines boasted punctuality, especially in comparison with their competitors. Austrian airlines came out on top with an 84% successful departure and arrival strike rate and Czech airlines were also a proud member of the top 10. According to the Prague Monitor, 81% of Czech airline flights arrived and departed on time last year.

On the gloomier side, Heathrow airport landed in as Europe's worst for delays, at a 35.5% strike rate. Heathrow is closely followed by Gatwick London, Rome, Dublin and Charles de Gaulle Paris respectively. The fact that these airports are Europe's busiest naturally influences the rate of delays. However, experts say that delays are not always a result of the popularity of the airport. So-called slot delays, whereby air traffic control struggles to find a time space for planes to take off, are a main reason for delays and highlight the problem of the lack of European airspace. Other reasons, not necessarily related to the status of the airport, involve technical problems, weather conditions and the time it takes for the loading process to be completed. Unfortunately, Heathrow and Gatwick encounter these problems all too frequently.

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