

VENEZUELA: INTL AIRPORT INTRODUCING A BREATHING TAX



How many people have darkly joked about the officials eventually imposing a surcharge on the air we breathe? Folks may jest no more. Those travel authorities who arrange for the sometimes questionable surcharges imposed on air travel have added yet another: a breathing tax.

Venezuela's Maiquetia International Airport (CCS), which serves the capitol city of Caracas, has recently added a 'breathing tax' to its lineup of surcharges. **At 127 bolivar (\$20), the breathing tax applies to all domestic and international passengers departing from the airport.** A quick check of the airport's website assures travelers that the fee is included in the ticket purchase or when award redemption is made. However, if the flight was booked prior to July 1st, 2014, air travelers will pay at the airport for the air they breathe there.

If travelers are breathlessly anticipating what the tax is about, Maiquetia International Airport recently installed a new air conditioning system which eliminates contaminants through the use of ozone. While the airport may now have the cleanest air of any other in South America, it is doubtful those who depart from there will get their full twenty dollars' worth. Holding one's breath will not help, either. There's no way to get around the tax other than flying out of Venezuela from a neighboring airport.

Some travelers have been airing their grievances about the breathing tax on social media by suggesting that Maiquetia International may have overpaid for its new air conditioning equipment. And now those overcharges are passed along to international and domestic flyers departing from the airport.

This may give a whole new meaning to air fare. If that doesn't leave air travelers gasping, it appears that Venezuela collects a lot more than a breathing tax. Based on a one way dummy booking made from Caracas to Houston, the airfare was found to include a Venezuela Airport Exit Tax (\$34.60), a Venezuelan Departure Tax, (\$43.90), and a mysterious \$11.50 fee labeled only as C2. At any rate, it appears Maiquetia International Airport has covered the cost of its new air conditioning equipment and a bit more.

If a traveler is left feeling like they had to buy their way out the country, those steep departure fees may be considered a bargain compared to others. London's Heathrow Airport doesn't have a breathing surcharge, but their departure costs are significantly more expensive. While the taxes don't apply to connector flights, departing from Heathrow will cost coach travelers \$200 in fees, and business or first class flyers over \$300 before they can 'taxee' down the runway.

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