

AIRLINES AND HOTELS TRY FREE CANCELLATIONS TO FEND OFF TOURISM SLOWDOWN



Airlines, hotel chains and travel agencies have begun email campaigns to market their holiday offers for March and May, in which Holy Week festivities will take place, while reviewing cancellation policies in a massive effort to stop tourism slowdown and the fall in bookings due to coronavirus.

“Airlines are responding to low demand by offering more flexibility in bookings so that dates can be changed or trips can be canceled in the event that the situation gets worse in the short term,” said Willie Walsh after the A4E Aviation Summit in Brussels.

Air France already announced that it will introduce changes and penalty-free cancellations on all flights that have been booked before March 31 and scheduled until May 31 due to the virus outbreak. The fine print of the airlines’ new policy, which has also reduced its offer, says that in case of cancellation, customers will receive a compensation that can be used to purchase another ticket.

British Airways also made a similar statement and announced that tickets purchased during the first half of March can be rescheduled without penalties; even Iberia airline now allows customers to reschedule flights to Italy or Japan while studying the possibility of applying this system on other routes.

“Customers face uncertainties when booking a flight so one has to become more reliable,” said a spokesperson from British Airways. In the case of Air Europa, the airline launched its “More freedom to reschedule” campaign, allowing customers to fly to almost all destinations with discounts of up to 40%, and reschedule dates without penalties. The price offers are valid for bookings starting from today until the 16th March to any destination within the EU.

The free cancellations strategy is spreading, and Globalia has just announced that its agencies Halcón, Ecuador and Travelplan will allow that bookings until March 31 and set for departure from May 1 and onwards can be cancelled without incurring fees for up to 15 days before departure. The Spanish corporation, led by Juan José Hidalgo, has also included in this policy its ‘Be Live Hotels’ hotel chain, offering the option of making a reservation until October 31, with free cancellation up to 7 days before the date.

Globalia’s announcement comes after Meliá Hotels’ campaign, which last week announced 45% discounts on all reservations and a free cancellation policy. Meanwhile, Room Mate Hotels offered penalty-free cancellations and date reschedule to customers with reservations in northern Italy so that they can travel another time without losing the deposit.

While more flexibility in booking policies is a much welcomed strategy, the many offers that travel agencies and airlines are announcing for flights on March and April is also key when it comes to increase demand; however, an overall collapse due to reduced prices is being contained by making route cuts. As of now, **the German airline Lufthansa has canceled 25% of its short-haul**

flights over the next weeks, with 150 aircraft on the ground, and 25 of them being long-haul aircraft.

Ryanair also has special offers to travel in March through its “Lower prices for spring savings” campaign, and offers tickets at 20 euros to fly to the United Kingdom and Milan, Barcelona, Ibiza or Masella, among other destinations.

Date: 2020-03-09

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/airlines-and-hotels-fight-tourism-slowdown-with-new-offers-news11431>