

THE BIGGEST AIRLINES IN THE WORLD?



The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has released information about the world's biggest air carriers. According to the data, the best performing airlines dwell in North America. The biggest number of air travelers used the services of US based **Southwest Airlines**. In 2007 they flew 101 911 000 passengers which was approximately two million less than in 2006. Second "biggest" company was American Airlines Inc. US's airlines owe their success to developed home air traffic. This is the reason why 6 companies in the top ten are from the United States.

The only non US airline that has managed to the top five is China Southern Airlines. This company has improved its position since 2006 when it was "only" the tenth. German Lufthansa ended up seventh and Air France was eight. The last in the top ten was the Irish company Ryanair with 50 465 000 passengers. In 2006 there were also two Japanese airlines among the top ten airlines All Nippon Airways and Japan Airlines Corporation. These two, however, dropped from the top ten for 2007.

The Chinese Southern Airlines has made such a progress thanks to the booming Chinese economy that has caused bigger demand for domestic air travel. Majority of the company's customers are intrastate travelers. The Chinese Southern Airlines is the biggest Chinese airline and it has even gained the Five-Star Flight Safety Award by the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC).

The situation in the international air travel is different. Here the Europeans are the top performers. The top six carriers in the international travel are Ryanair, Lufthansa, Air France, Easyjet, British Airways and KLM. The air travel in 2007 grew by approximately 7 per cent. Airlines worldwide transported 2.25 billion passengers. Asia has witnessed the fastest growth. However, the global economic downturn and the rising prices of jet fuel will inevitably influence the future development in the aviation sector.

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