

# AVIATION INDUSTRY IN TURMOIL: FUEL CRISIS PROMPTS SCHEDULE ADJUSTMENTS



A jump in fuel prices - from \$600 to \$1,286 per ton of kerosene - has hit the aviation industry hard, says recent IATA data. Because of this spike, operators now cut marginal routes while reshaping network plans. Government promises and group statements try to calm passengers; yet pressure builds behind the scenes. Though flights still run on schedule, Eurocontrol notes fewer seats available

next summer.

Operations shift quietly under strain, even without mass disruptions. Tensions tied to military actions near Iran keep feeding into delays and cost hikes across supply chains. Not every effect shows at check-in counters - but they shape decisions deep within airline offices.

## Modest Drop in Capacity During Early Summer

Backed by fresh data from Eurocontrol, flight plans across Europe show a slight dip - around 2 percent - for May and June 2026 when measured against earlier forecasts drawn up in April.

**Because operating costs keep climbing, airlines now favor routes that bring in more revenue per seat.** With fuel prices rising sharply, budget-focused carriers face growing strain - their promise of cheap trips becoming harder to deliver. A few companies have started shifting their strategies quietly.

Early summer's dip might not last long. Should reservations pick up soon, experts suggest, the downturn could fade fast. July looks brighter than winter 2026 in many areas, according to OAG figures - airline capacity climbing slightly overall. A modest gain of 0.9% appears likely across Western Europe. Growth there seems slower than in the east, where a 2.2% jump looms. Though hurdles persist in the Middle East, leaders aren't ruling out recovery; just a 5% drop now expected.

## Summer Growth Holds Up Amid Challenges

Despite regional differences, growth still defines Europe's air travel outlook over the past twelve months. Flight availability in Western Europe should rise 3.6% between summer 2025 and summer 2026, bringing about 18.5 million extra seats. Much of that boost flows toward coastal spots, where vacation interest stays high. Then again, countries like Spain, Italy, and Greece take up 72% of the new supply - proof enough that beach trips continue to draw crowds.

Among Europe's top ten aviation industry markets:

- The United Kingdom leads with 103 million seats.
- Spain follows with 88.7 million seats.
- Germany ranks third with 78.9 million seats.
- Italy takes fourth place, showing the strongest growth at +8.9%, reaching 67.2 million seats. This surge is fueled notably by the expansion of Wizz Air (+35%).
- France rounds out the top five with 58 million seats.

Among large economies, Turkey stands apart due to a drop in its summer timetable.

### **The Aviation Industry's Reaction**

Though rising fuel costs pose real challenges, smart routing decisions, careful expansion on key routes, together with steady traveler interest in Mediterranean spots, point to adaptation instead of retreat across the sector. Air carriers maintain close attention to shifts in global politics alongside oil market trends, weighing expenses against keeping flights running at reasonable rates when feasible.

**Summer 2026 brings shifts in air travel, especially on less-traveled paths, though popular vacation destinations may see more seats open up.** Whether solid booking numbers emerge soon could shape how well airlines bounce back from fuel-related setbacks and return to broader operations. What happens next depends heavily on demand trends unfolding over the next few weeks.

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