

News from TravelFocus

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[British Airways Proposed Cabin Crew Strike](#)

The Transport and General Workers Union's (T&G) cabin crew branch has announced that it is **planning industrial action on January 29, 30 and 31; February 5, 6 and 7; and February 12, 13 and 14.** We would like to assure you that we remain committed to resolving this dispute through continued talks. We have today asked an external mediation service to assist us in taking this process forward with the T&G.

In the meantime, all British Airways flights continue to operate normally. We are currently assessing the impact any potential industrial action will have on our flight schedule, in the event that a strike does take place. We are working as quickly as possible to confirm our plans for the affected period. If any of your employees are due to travel between January 29 and February 16, we understand that they may wish to change their plans. As a result, we have introduced a policy that enables you to rebook flights for a different date.

We understand that this is an uncertain time for our customers. We would like to reassure you that we are doing everything we can to make sure that disruption is minimized in the event of any industrial action. To enable us to reach your travelers with the latest travel information before their flights, we recommend that all bookings contain passenger contact details (mobile number, email address). Travelers should visit Manage My Booking at [ba.com](#) to ensure their details are up to date.

We hope to make full information available regarding the first period of action from Wednesday, January 24, and will update you accordingly. With this said, if we have to make flight cancellations as a result of this industrial action, we will publish a comprehensive policy that will cover rebooking, rerouting and refund options. You may be able to make changes to your booking via the Change Booking facility on [ba.com](#).

If you are unable to make changes to your booking on [ba.com](#), you can call British Airways or contact your travel agent. If you are in the US or Canada, you can call us at 1-800-AIRWAYS. In the UK you can reach us on (free phone) 0800 727 800. For the latest information on the situation, please go to the latest flight news pages on [ba.com](#).



[Taxis Impose Flat JFK Fare \(Source: BTNmag.com\)](#)

Taxicab travelers to John F. Kennedy International Airport from anywhere in Manhattan now will pay a \$45 flat fare, the same as they do when riding from the airport to the city. The new rate took effect on Nov. 30, 2006, and represents what New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission chairman Matthew Daus termed a "two-way street." "The time had come to make the fare the same as from the airport because it gives consumers what they want and expect, and lets them know in advance what the fare will be, ending any confusion about cost," Daus said. Overcharging problems have existed, he added.

Cost is per vehicle, not per person, he said, so business travelers can share the ride. "For business travelers from the same company, it means travel cost savings for the company, something a travel manager, with people going to the same place, could coordinate at hotels and at the airport," he remarked. Some flat rates are in effect in other cities, including in Los Angeles, but that didn't influence the Taxi and Limousine Commission's decision, he said.

While the Taxi and Limousine Commission regulates several other transportation industries, such as New York's black-car luxury sedans, none of these was affected by the new rate. "Those industries are free to set fares as competition dictates, based on their various forms and levels of premium service, but they must file their rates with the Taxi and Limousine Commission which monitors areas such as drug tests, insurance, inspections, public safety and the barest minimums of customer service," Daus said.

"The new flat fare has been popular with cab drivers, strongly supported by the League of Mutual Taxi Owners and popular with passengers as well. It serves the purpose of giving travelers an attractive and economical alternative mode of transportation to JFK airport. The flat fare from JFK to Manhattan, instituted in March 1996, has been tremendously popular with visitors over the last decade," said Taxi and Limousine Commission chairman Daus.



[Royal Caribbean to cut trans fats \(Source: TravelWeekly.com\)](#)

Royal Caribbean International has joined the war against trans fats. Effective immediately, the line is cooking with trans-fat-free oil and offering trans-fat-free menu options. It will start removing menu items with trans fats on March 1 with the goal of having a trans-fat-free menu by the end of the year. Trans fats are found in partially hydrogenated vegetable oils and have been linked to diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.



[TSA Clears Reg. Traveler To Launch At Four Airports \(Source: BTNonline.com\)](#)

Four airports committed to launch the Clear Registered Traveler program gained Transportation Security Administration approval and will begin operating programs this week, Verified Identity Pass said. Airports in Cincinnati, Indianapolis, New York-JFK and San Jose now are poised to roll out the program. The program promises to speed travelers who satisfy a background check through security checkpoints and costs \$99.95 annually.

In a statement issued last week for the launch of the British Airways-sponsored program at New York-JFK's Terminal 7, Verified Identity Pass founder and CEO Steven Brill said, "Agreements with several other airports and airlines are expected to be announced during the first quarter of 2007. Additional agreements and launches will be announced shortly and will accelerate through the year."



[Hotel Rates to Rise in Boston despite New Supply \(Source: BTNmag.com\)](#)

Despite the addition of new supply due to two new major hotels—InterContinental Boston and Westin Boston Waterfront—in Boston last year, analysts expect the city's average 2007 hotel room rate to rise by more than 6 percent, year over year." Average rates in the Boston market in 2007 will be driven by strong increases in other national markets, by momentum from 2006 that is very likely to carry over to this year, by the luxury orientation of new product, large citywides and continued strong demand that will help compression," said Matt Arrants, managing director of Boston-based hospitality consulting firm Pinnacle Advisory Group.

Pinnacle predicts average room rate will be \$204.94 per night in 2007, up from \$192.72 in 2006, about a 6.3 percent increase. Occupancy in the market for 2007 is expected to drop by about 1 percent, largely due to new supply. "The two new hotels that opened last year will have a big effect on that 1 point," Arrants said. "Occupancy in 2006 in the Boston-Cambridge market was 78 percent. It's expected to be 77 percent this year."

"In terms of occupancy and room rate performance, Boston is one of the top five markets in the nation every year because of its strong balance of corporate and leisure business," Arrants said. "This provides the market with the ability to adjust to seasonal shifts in demand. For example, in the summer, when corporate demand is lower, the leisure travel market is way up. So, when one segment is weak, the other balances it out, helping to keep the market strong throughout the year."

In 2007 and beyond, he said, factors that will keep the Boston market strong include new supply—including the addition of the 308-room Charles Street Jail Hotel in the Beacon Hill area in May and a 477-room Renaissance in the Waterfront District in December—increased meeting and convention demand, and increased leisure demand. This year in suburban Boston, Arrants said, look for limited new supply, slightly less compression, an improved economy and conversions. The 424-room InterContinental, the brand's first-ever Boston hotel, offers high-speed Internet, a 24-hour business center and 32,000 square feet of meeting and event space. The 17-story Westin, with 793 rooms, on Boston's waterfront is connected to the 516,000-sq.-ft. Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, which opened in 2004. Business travel-related amenities include high-speed wired and wireless Internet access.

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