

OUR VIEW

Buying the cheapest airline tickets is much more complicated than internet sites imply. For each flight there can be many blocks of seats - up to 4 in First Class, up to 5 in Business Class, and up to 20 in Economy Class. Each block may have different terms and prices. Airlines don't release all seats into the various computer reservation systems and ultimately to internet sites at the same time. They are released a few at a time according to demand (a way of maximising profit known as yield management). There may be no seats available at the price you require one minute but several the next, so to pay the price you want, either you or your travel agent needs to spend time checking and rechecking for availability.

Travel Agent vs. Internet – We evaluate the hidden cost



Time wasting?



Frustration?



Lost productivity?

Many companies feel they can obtain better deals by booking on the internet. We respect this view and we can help make savings by guiding clients towards the better internet sites.

In our recent experience however, we have found that employers are now asking whether employee time is better spent concentrating on company core business, rather than researching cheaper air tickets online.

Few employees have any idea how much they cost per hour, when employer's NI and pension contributions are included, and a couple of hours researching on the internet passes very quickly. Add to this wasted productive time, possible additional travel and subsistence costs of an unnecessary journey to London where a local airport could have been used, and the apparent savings pale into insignificance.

Internet bookers also have the responsibility of keeping track of any flight changes, and any visa or inoculation requirements for their journey, things for which a travel agent would normally be responsible.

An agent will often allow the option of changing or cancelling a booking during the day whereas once you press the "accept" button on the internet, you are committed. And remember that when you book on the internet you pay at the time whereas a travel agent usually gives credit.

Budget vs. legacy carriers (scheduled airlines). Are they really as good as they seem?



Without a doubt the budget airlines are taking a slice of the air travel market – around 18% this year. If they provide exactly what you want that's great, but there are a few points to consider.

- Look for the additional costs not normally made by legacy carriers, but often charged by the budget airlines. We believe Ryanair to be the biggest culprits here i.e.
 1. Online check in £5 per person each way.
 2. Airport check in is £40 per person each way, *even if Ryanair's computer system goes down and online check in is unavailable!*
 3. Credit card / debit card payment charges are £5 per passenger per sector, even though you cannot pay by any other means.
 4. Baggage in the hold is charged at £10 per item each way.
 5. Golf club bags are £30 per item each way.
 6. Child booster seat is £10 per item each way.
- Some of the airports used by the budget airlines (especially Ryanair) are not the main city airport. Travellers to Brussels for instance need to factor in the additional cost/inconvenience/unproductive time involved in the 90 minute journey from Charleroi into the city centre.
- Budget airlines often have only one flight per day to certain destinations. Miss the return and you may be faced with additional overnight costs.
- When budget airlines planes go technical (break-down), they frequently cancel the flight, whereas legacy carriers have a greater responsibility to get you to your destination.
- Paying budget airlines is quick and easy. But if you need to change your ticket or cancel it, our clients have found this is very time consuming and costly. With legacy carriers this is usually quick and easy.
- With legacy carriers seats are allocated so there is no pushing and shoving for a seat.