



Flying This Summer? There's Good News and Bad News

Published May 23, 2025 at 1:42 PM EDT

Updated May 23, 2025 at 2:43 PM EDT



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But for budget-conscious travelers, that shift may not be entirely bad news.

As demand for air travel softens, airlines are slashing fares, trimming routes and loosening pricing strategies to fill seats. According to Skyscanner's 2025 Smarter Summer Report, 84 percent of American travelers are open to adjusting their travel dates or destinations to save money. And with 64 percent still undecided or unbooked, the market is ripe for last-minute deals.

"We're seeing travelers becoming more flexible than ever," Laura Lindsay, Skyscanner's global travel trends expert, told *Newsweek*. "They are stretching their budgets, extending their travel time, and exploring more underrated destinations."

Travel Deals in a Downturn

This summer's backdrop—marked by President [Donald Trump](#)'s on-again, off-again tariffs, safety concerns and a



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offering the most affordable fares.



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"Not only does it appear that travel demand is relatively inelastic, but demand for air travel is driven by growing economic status," said Addison Schonland, aviation expert and co-founder of AirInsight.

Delta CEO Ed Bastian also noted a swift slowdown in both corporate travel and bookings during the company's first-quarter 2025 earnings call, warning that continued weakness could lead to further route reductions.

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"In a period of maximum or potentially maximum uncertainty all companies do what they can to make sure they protect their future," Bastian said in March.

Flexibility Over Frills

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"The desire to travel appears robust, so any exogenous impact (like tariffs) is unlikely to slow down demand. What we might see is that travel changes destinations," Schonland said.

Travelers are pivoting not only in terms of timing but also in choosing lesser-known locations. Off-the-beaten-path cities like Asheville Wilmington in North Carolina and Hilo, Hawaii, are among Skyscanner's top affordable picks. Avoiding the traditional July and early August rush also helps travelers sidestep peak-season prices and crowds.



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Travelers move through Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Friday, Dec. 20, 2024, in Atlanta. (AP Photo/Mike Stewart) **MIKE STEWART/AP**

September airfares to destinations like Buffalo, Portland, Ore. and Miami are averaging below \$260, while June flights ✕

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U.S. altogether this summer.

The shoulder season, in particular, is gaining popularity. A third of Americans say they're traveling in June or September for better prices and a more laid-back vibe. Among Gen Z travelers, that number jumps to 42 percent.

Aviation Disruptions Add Uncertainty

While economic uncertainty is driving many Americans to reconsider air travel, recent developments in aviation infrastructure are adding to the pressure. At Newark Liberty International Airport, a major hub for [United Airlines](#) and a critical international gateway, staffing shortages among air traffic controllers have [triggered widespread delays and cancellations](#). United has cut 35 daily roundtrip flights to minimize disruptions, according to [CNN](#).



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Passengers ride the air train at Newark Liberty International Airport in Newark, New Jersey on May 7, 2025. **KENA BETANCUR/GETTY IMAGES**



safety, the added uncertainty is yet another reason some are staying grounded—or switching to trips by road and rail.

Silver Linings for Domestic Travelers

International arrivals to the U.S. are expected to decline this year, driven in part by trade tensions and political backlash to the Trump administration. As a result, industry analysts forecast a \$12.5 billion drop in travel spending—from \$181 billion in 2024 to under \$169 billion.

That's bad news for local economies that depend on those summer tourist dollars, but good news for domestic travelers and their pocketbooks. To stay competitive, major hotel chains and travel platforms are slashing prices and lowering their forecasts. Both Expedia and [Airbnb](#) have revised their revenue expectations downward, while hotel giants like Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt are reporting slower growth.

Despite the economic and political uncertainty, Americans are hitting the road in record numbers. According to AAA, an estimated 45.1 million people are expected to travel by car, train, or plane over Memorial Day weekend, up from 43.8 million last year.

SkyScanner's Top 10 Cheapest Domestic Destinations

1. Wilmington, NC
2. Hilo, HI
3. Atlanta, GA
4. Myrtle Beach, SC



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