

## Low Cost Airlines



Ever since no-frills low cost flights were introduced in 1993, holidaymakers have been enjoying cheap overseas travel. Where booking a flight as part of a package holiday was once an annual luxury, now flight companies across Europe and beyond offer cut price flights for everyday travel. And even domestic flights between UK cities are becoming a quicker and more economical way of travelling than ever increasing rail ticket costs.

### The Debate

Low cost airlines are great news for consumers, but not so good for the environment. The low cost flight industry depends on being able to offer a large number of flights, which means more CO<sub>2</sub> emissions contributing to climate change. Emissions from the aviation industry have doubled between 1990 and 2000, and the debate over low cost airlines contributing towards this figure continues.

On the one hand, low cost airlines have given everyone the chance of affordable overseas travel, but the backlash against them has been fierce. Environment minister Ian Pearson branded the likes of EasyJet and Ryanair "not just the unacceptable face of capitalism... [but] the irresponsible face of capitalism". On the other hand, low cost airlines are quick to point out that their green credentials outstrip long haul flight companies and bigger transport pollutants such as motor travel.

### Make a Green Decision

Whenever planning a journey in the UK or abroad, you should consider your options before deciding on your method of transport and try to bear in mind the bigger picture to the environment.

If you are planning on flying, there are options to help alleviate the damage to the environment that's being caused. Carbon offsetting is a way of cancelling out the carbon emissions generated as a result of you travelling. While it doesn't address the long term problems, schemes such as those offered by the [Carbon Neural Company](#) do help make a difference on an individual basis. In return for making a donation to cover the CO2 emitted during your journey, your money will go towards forestation and other green projects all over the world.

It's also still worth considering alternative ways of travelling domestically or if you're going to the continent. Passengers who fly between London, Paris and Brussels generate ten times more CO2 emissions than travellers who go by rail, according to train operator Eurostar. Travelling by train is a quick and direct way of travelling, and can also be reasonably priced when booked in advance.

### The Future of Low Cost Airlines

Early indications suggest it's fairly certain that the price of flying will rise, with Gordon Brown's pre-Budget report announcing small increases in Air Passenger Duty. It's down to individual flight companies to decide how much of this cost will be passed on directly to its passengers, but the more the Duty increases, the more likely we'll notice the difference in price.

Flights within Europe will come under the jurisdiction of the Emissions Trading Scheme by 2011, meaning that airlines will be issued with pollution permits and have to pay for exceeding the permitted levels of emissions. Airlines that reduce their carbon emissions will be able to sell back permits.

However there is also a growing call for the flight companies themselves to do more than just pay the financial penalties for the emissions they produce as accessory to their profits. Tony Blair recently put the onus on technological advances in the aviation industry providing a solution in the long term. This means airlines will need to come up with new technology to make air travel greener.

