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## London leads on long-haul travel

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London continues to be at the centre of global air travel, with six of the past decade's 10 fastest growing long-haul routes going through London's major airports. Analysis by Ascend underlines the UK capital's position as a global economic and leisure hub. London holds its number one position despite all the challenges from other European continental airports and rising airport congestion in the UK.

Over the past 10 years, the London and Dubai route has grown faster than any other. On flights between the two cities, the number of seats available has more than tripled since 1996. Almost 850,000 more seats were available in the skies between the two cities from January to June of this year, than there were in the first half of 1996. This equates to some 50 more flights each way, each week.

According to Ascend, the world's top 10 long-haul global growth routes are:

1. London - Dubai
2. London - Chicago
3. London - Hong Kong
4. Melbourne - Singapore
5. Sydney - Singapore
6. London - Singapore
7. London - Mumbai
8. Dubai - Singapore
9. London - New York
10. Brisbane - Singapore

Flights between London and Chicago experienced the second highest increase with over 520,000 more seats available in the same period, while space for an additional 480,000 passengers on London/Hong Kong flights is now available.

Seats on flights within the Asia Pacific region have also increased substantially, most prominently between Singapore and Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

#### Dubai flies high

The London to Dubai route soared in popularity over the past decade, overtaking previously more popular routes such as London to Singapore, London to Chicago and Singapore to Sydney. This growth has been driven largely by Emirates successful expansion; Emirates now operates 62 flights a week between London and Dubai (based on July 2006 schedules).

“The huge increase of passenger activity between London and Dubai has mirrored Dubai’s growth as a substantial regional power in the areas of tourism, construction, finance and trade over the past decade,” says Gehan Talwate, Managing Director of Ascend. “Free trade zones, a shift towards a more service-orientated economy, a state of the art international airport, and wide choice of luxury resorts are all making Dubai an increasingly attractive destination for tourists.”

“The rise in the importance of Dubai and Singapore to global aviation reflects the liberal regulatory approach to the airline industry taken by their respective governments,” Talwate says.

#### Uncle Sam loses out

The biggest loser of the past decade in terms of seat numbers is the Honolulu/Tokyo route, on which the number of available seats has dropped by almost 670,000 since the first half of 1996.

Once at the forefront of Japanese tourism, which boomed in the late 1990s, Hawaii remains a major market, but has suffered a drop in visitors from Japan over the past decade driven by a variety of factors.

“Exchange rates, fluctuations in the Japanese economy, changes in tourism trends, airline financial crises, concerns following September 11th and the rise of competing local Asian tourism markets,” Talwatte says, “have all served to hit demand in the traditional Japan-US travel markets. Further recent issues on visa restrictions and instability in the South American economies have also hit the ‘within Americas’ markets.”

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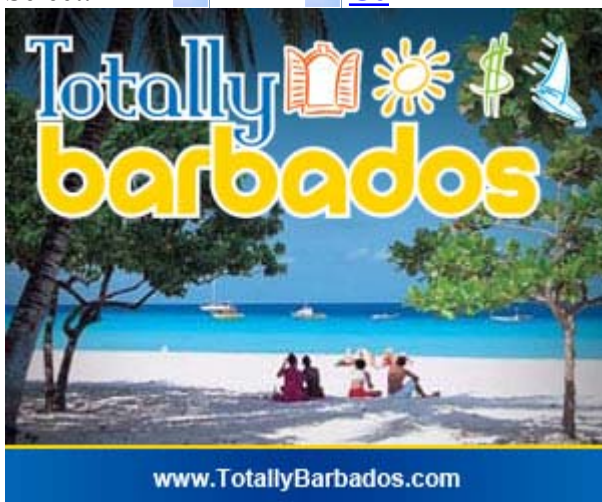


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