

Airlines allow passengers to use own handsets

Mobile phones arrive on flights

AIR TRAVEL

You could be sitting next to someone using their mobile phone on your next flight. And if the prospect of hearing 'I'm on a plane' for three hours fills you with dread, you're not alone.

BMI – the first UK airline to install technology that allows passengers to use their mobiles during flights – was set to begin its trial in August as we went to press. BMI will allow only text messages, however, which will cost about 39p each.

Other UK airlines, such as British Airways and Virgin Atlantic, are waiting and watching before they decide whether to allow mobile use, but Ryanair was also set to start a trial last month, offering calls and texts.

To help inform the debate, we asked 1,000 people for their views. In our poll, only 30% thought it was a good idea and 27% were indifferent.

A sizeable 67% said they would find it annoying if fellow passengers used a

mobile during a flight. And 79% thought that if it were allowed, it should be banned at night.

Despite these figures, 40% said that if it were allowed, they'd be likely to use their phone to call or text.

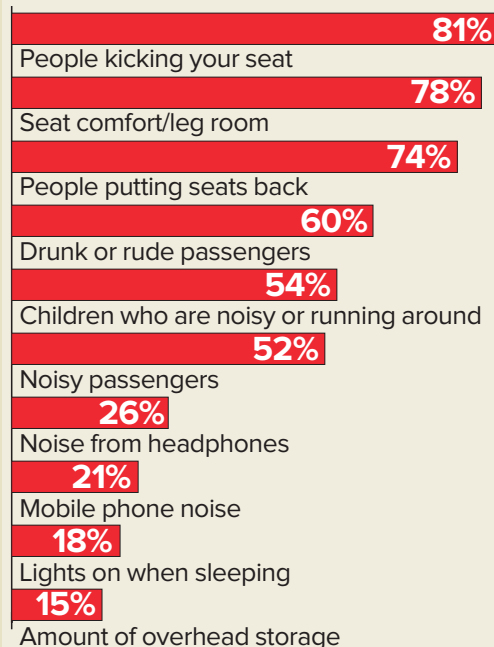
For our online poll, carried out in June, we also asked those who'd flown in the past 12 months what were the biggest annoyances on flights. The biggest gripe – for 81% – was the passenger behind kicking your seat; 78% cited seat comfort and leg room and 74% hated the person in front putting their seat back.

Drunk or rude passengers were also a big issue, as was noise. This included mobile phone noise, since some airlines, such as Air France, have been trialling the service for months. Air France says passengers are billed by their usual operator and rates are comparable to roaming charges for calls from abroad.

The European Commission will monitor charges and the information about them that's given to passengers.



YOUR TOP 10 IRRITATIONS ON BOARD



Based on responses (477) of people who'd flown in the past 12 months.



How you'll handle the crunch

MONEY

Up to a quarter of Which? members plan to cut their spending on non-essentials, such as eating out, in the coming year.

With the current economic uncertainty, our survey this summer of more than 1,900 people shows that 24% plan to cut back on restaurant spending – while 11% will spend more.

Overall, 46% of those questioned will reduce spending on at least one of the following: books, CDs and DVDs, clothes,

entertainment and restaurants.

Many are also holding off on buying big-ticket items. While 9% have cancelled plans to spend on audiovisual goods, 25% will delay their buying (and 4% will buy a cheaper product) – meaning more difficult times ahead for high-street retailers.

And 23% of respondents said they plan to cancel, reduce or delay spending on white goods such as washing machines.

But, overall, you put quality before price. In our survey, 54% said that their choices aren't

based on price, and a further 20% opt for expensive white and audiovisual goods as they believe they'll last longer. Only 3% usually buy cheaper products.

This follows July's 'Money saving special' (p4-9) that gave members' top tips on getting their favourite goods for less.

Which? editor Neil Fowler said: 'Fewer members are splashing out on luxuries – but they still want quality and value for money. We'll offer exceptional value Best Buys and guidance on getting bargains whenever we can.'

Yet more tweaks to rail tickets cause concern over fares

All change for train tickets

TRAIN TRAVEL

September will see the second swave of changes to ticket names this year – and confusion about new systems and concern about price rises persist.

We surveyed train operators to try to make sense of it all.

The first wave of changes, in May, meant that all advance tickets, such as Apex, were rebranded as Advance tickets.

This month, 'turn-up-and-go' fares will be rebranded as Anytime, Off Peak and Super Off Peak.

The Association of Train Operating Companies has said there'll be no price rises resulting from the 'simplification'. However, companies are allowed to change their fares in May and September, and some are doing so this month.

During the first wave, Cross

Country stopped discount railcards being using on peak services, and some are concerned that the name changes could be used as a smoke screen for fare increases.

Rail watchdog Passenger Focus is monitoring the changes, which follow news from the Office of Rail Regulation that rail prices have increased in real terms by 13.6% since 1995.



The future for fares

■ VIRGIN

No planned fare increases but cutting cheapest advance fares by up to 50% from the autumn.

■ CROSS COUNTRY

Yet to announce September changes as we went to press.

■ FIRST SCOTRAIL

No fare increases.

■ FIRST GREAT WESTERN

No fare increases. Network

away-break ticket (currently valid only for five days) will be valid for a month on off-peak services.

■ NATIONAL EXPRESS EAST COAST

Cheapest advance fares for first and standard class tickets unchanged. However, some other types of advance fares will rise by an average of 7%.



TAKE ACTION!

■ Visit www.megatrain.com for cheap fares. Also visit National Rail Enquiries – at www.nationalrail.co.uk – and check what's listed on its special offers page.

Phone our editors

Our editorial team will take to the phones once more this month to answer your questions and collect comments about the magazine. On 11 September, editor Neil Fowler (pictured) and colleagues will tackle any subject, from our reports on the latest mobile phones to your views on our Best Buy motors. Call between 11am and 3pm, on 01992 822800, and quote your membership number.



Food campaign win

Children's TV channel Nickelodeon UK has pledged to use its cartoon characters to promote only healthier foods – marking a great victory for our kids' food campaign. We're delighted that Nickelodeon is using its expertise and creativity to help parents encourage their children to eat a healthy diet. Go to www.which.co.uk/kidsfood for more.

Drop your salt

We're also pleased to hear that the average daily salt intake in the UK has dropped to 8.6g. But more work is needed to reach the government's 6g target, so the Food Standards Agency is targeting the catering industry and certain manufacturers. See www.salt.gov.uk for advice.



Overseas text charges

The price of sending a text from another EU country is to fall after the European Commission said it would end the rip-off. It found the average price was 23p – 10 times as much as texts within a country. A cap will be proposed in October. Visit www.which.co.uk/euroaming for a link to find out what you pay.

PPI contact

If you've contacted our PPI campaign team via ppl@which.co.uk and didn't get an automatic response, we're sorry – a technical fault means that we didn't receive your email. The address now works so we'd love to hear your story.

The way we were

25 years ago, September 1983

We revealed that it was almost impossible to find out how well a new car might survive in a crash. We called for an easy-to-understand system for rating this. In the 1990s, a Europe-wide testing system for new cars was brought in. Nearly 6,000 people died in road crashes in 1983; by last year, this was down to 2,943.



50 years ago, September 1958

We debunked extravagant claims made by some manufacturers of toothpaste that their products included special therapeutic ingredients to help reduce tooth decay. We also raised the question of whether you could use soap or detergent rather than toothpaste to clean your teeth. Possibly, we concluded, though the taste might not be as good.