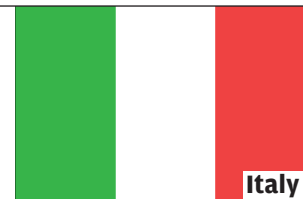


France

**Best airlines** Aurigny, Jet2.com, EasyJet, Flybe  
**Worst airlines** XL Airways, First Choice Airways, MyTravel Airways, Thomas Cook Airlines



**Best airlines** Palmar, Jet2.com, EasyJet, Flybe  
**Worst airlines** XL Airways, First Choice Airways, MyTravel Airways, Alitalia, Thomas Cook Airlines



Italy



Spain

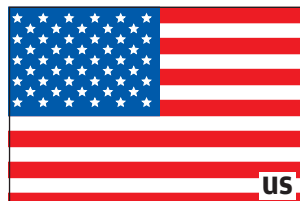
**Best airlines** Palmar, Jet2.com, EasyJet, Flybe  
**Worst airlines** XL Airways, Air Europa, First Choice Airways, MyTravel Airways, Iberia, Thomas Cook Airlines



**Best airlines** Palmar, Jet2.com, EasyJet, Flybe  
**Worst airlines** XL Airways, First Choice Airways, MyTravel Airways, Thomas Cook Airlines



Portugal



us

**Best airlines** Air New Zealand, BMI, Virgin Atlantic  
**Worst airlines** Fly Globespan, MyTravel Airways, Thomas Cook Airlines, Air India



# High flyers

The glamour of air travel may have gone, but our survey of Which? members shows there are still some classy carriers

**T**ravelling by air hasn't had the best press recently. Take the fiasco at Heathrow Terminal 5's opening in March, confusing restrictions on hand baggage, endless queues to clear security, or – to quote a recent government report – the 'unpleasant' experience on certain 'low cost' airlines. Flying is no longer seen as exciting and sophisticated.

Yet our appetite for air travel is insatiable. Unconstrained by airport capacity, UK passenger numbers are predicted to more than double from 228 million a year in 2005 to 465 million a year by 2030, despite the rising cost of oil. That's the equivalent of

two Boeing 747s taking off every minute of the day, 365 days a year.

Choosing the right airline is one way to make air travel more enjoyable. Thanks to around 30,000 Which? members who completed our survey (see 'Our research', opposite), we've got insider information on 71 long- and short-haul airlines. Check-in, cabin staff, comfort, cleanliness, food and entertainment have been rated by those who matter most – you, the passengers.

## Flying high

In the long-haul category, Singapore Airlines topped the poll with an impressive

**Our survey showed big differences in customer satisfaction with airlines flying direct to the most-visited destinations**

customer satisfaction score of 85%, closely followed by India's Jet Airways (84%) and Air New Zealand (80%). The all-business-class airline Silverjet scored 86%, but the carrier had suspended operations due to financial difficulties as we went to press.

The reputation of south-east Asian airlines for customer service and hospitality is confirmed by good long-haul ratings for Malaysia Airlines and Thai Airways International, which, like Singapore Airlines, did particularly well on the helpfulness of their staff and the comfort and cleanliness of their planes. Middle Eastern carriers El Al, Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad Airways were also highly rated.

Those of you who flew long-haul – defined as any destination beyond Europe and North Africa – are more likely overall to have been satisfied with your airline's service than if you stayed closer to home. But don't despair: there are plenty of good short-haul airlines too.

**South-east Asian and Middle Eastern airlines were highly rated**

PHOTOGRAPHY ALAMY

Topping the list with a customer satisfaction score of 80% is little-known Palmar, whose single aircraft (based at Bournemouth Airport) proves that small can definitely be beautiful. Just behind Palmar is no-frills German carrier Germanwings (78%), closely followed by its full-service compatriot Air Berlin (76%).

### Leave at the holding point

If you're travelling to a long-haul destination, give Spain's Iberia a wide berth: a miserable satisfaction score of 27% makes it the lowest-rated airline in this category. Things don't get much better on its shorter flights: its score of 38% is one of the worst among the short-haul carriers. Only Thomas Cook Airlines and Italian carrier Alitalia (both 37%) achieved a lower score.

### Best of British

Conspicuous by its absence from the upper reaches of our tables (see p42-43) is the most frequently used airline in our survey. British Airways (BA), used by one in six of you, will be disappointed with its distinctly average ratings for its long- and short-haul services.

In the short-haul category, UK-based no-frills carriers Jet2.com, EasyJet, Flybe and BMIbaby all scored more highly than full-service BA on customer satisfaction, and little Guernsey-based Aurigny was one of the best short-haul airlines, with an overall score of 72%. Over longer distances, BMI, Virgin Atlantic and First Choice all scored more highly than BA.

### Don't choose charters

Obviously, not every airline flies to every destination, but on many routes you'll have a choice. Our chart, opposite, shows the best- and worst-rated airlines serving your five most-visited destinations.

More than a quarter of you told us you'd booked your flight as part of a package holiday with no choice of airline. Unfortunately, the charter airlines owned by the three big tour operators – Thomas Cook (Thomas Cook Airlines, which has taken over MyTravel Airways), Tui Travel (Thomsonfly and First Choice Airways) and XL Leisure Group (XL Airways) – did not score highly. The exception was First Choice on long-haul routes, where it rated a reasonable 60% for customer satisfaction.

The performance of no-frills airlines on popular short-haul routes, such as to Spain, Portugal and Italy, was more varied.

## What about EasyJet and Ryanair?

The best-known no-frills airlines failed to get top marks for value



Almost one fifth of all the flights in our survey were taken on just two airlines – Ryanair and EasyJet. The two companies, which champion low fares above pretty much everything else, scored highly for value for money – though they failed to get top marks.

EasyJet, which had a higher overall satisfaction score (59% to Ryanair's 47%), did reasonably well on the efficiency and helpfulness of its cabin staff, cleanliness of

its planes and the way it dealt with any delays. Ryanair was rated poorly in all these areas, particularly on cleanliness of its aircraft.

The food on board both airlines – all of which has to be paid for – was rated poorly, as was seat comfort.

You also criticised the two airlines' pre-flight arrangements, which include helpfulness and efficiency of check-in staff or ease of online check-in, baggage

policies and seat allocation. Again, Ryanair scored particularly badly on this.

So is it a case of you get what you pay for? Not necessarily. The scores of Germanwings and Hungary's Wizz Air, which also offer a no-frills service without 'extras' included in the price of their tickets, show that airlines that operate in this way can still achieve high levels of customer satisfaction.

Jet2.com was rated the highest, just ahead of EasyJet, Flybe and BMIbaby. Interestingly, BMIbaby scored more highly on short-haul routes than its full service sister airline, BMI. Ryanair, Thomsonfly, Monarch and Fly Globespan did less well.

If you're flying to the United States (the most popular long-haul destination in our survey), steer clear of Air India, Thomas Cook Airlines and Fly Globespan. Your best options on flights to the US are Air New Zealand, BMI and Virgin Atlantic.

### Value doesn't mean cheap

In real terms the average cost of flying has almost halved over the past 10 years or so. No-frills airlines such as EasyJet and Ryanair have been hugely influential in driving down prices, making air travel more affordable for everyone.

Two of the highest scoring short-haul airlines were no-frills carriers – Wizz Air

### Good old-fashioned service is one way to customers' hearts

(from Hungary) and Germanwings. However, most of the highest rated airlines don't follow the no-frills model. And neither EasyJet nor Ryanair gets top marks for value for money (see above).

In fact, the best full-service carriers score just as highly on value for money as their no-frills competitors – proving that good old-fashioned customer service is still one way to passengers' hearts.

### OUR RESEARCH

In February 2008 we sent a postal questionnaire to 200,000 Which? members asking them to rate their satisfaction with the airline they had used on their most recent flight. Which? Online members and members of our online panel were also invited to complete the survey. We received 30,059 responses from people who had travelled for personal (rather than business) reasons, allowing us to report on 71 different airlines. Many thanks to all those who took part.

## Long-haul airlines

	CABIN STAFF	PRE-FLIGHT	CLEANLINESS	COMFORT	DEALING WITH DELAYS	ENTERTAINMENT	FOOD	VALUE FOR MONEY	CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SCORE (%)
1 SINGAPORE AIRLINES (403)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	85
2 JET AIRWAYS (49)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	84
3 AIR NEW ZEALAND (270)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	80
4 EL AL AIRLINES (36)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	75
5 EMIRATES (593)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	75
6 QATAR AIRWAYS (109)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	75
7 BMI (BRITISH MIDLAND) (86)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	70
8 ETIHAD AIRWAYS (55)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	70
9 EVA AIR (64)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	69
10 MALAYSIA AIRLINES (133)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	68
11 ZOOM AIRLINES (119)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	68
12 THAI AIRWAYS INT'L (148)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	66
13 VIRGIN ATLANTIC (1,428)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	66
14 KLM (202)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	63
15 SRI LANKAN AIRLINES (62)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	63
16 FIRST CHOICE AIRWAYS (161)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	60
17 AIR CANADA (277)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	57
18 BRITISH AIRWAYS (2,322)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	57
19 CATHAY PACIFIC (106)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	57
20 CONTINENTAL AIRLINES (265)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	57
21 DELTA AIRLINES (132)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	57
22 KENYA AIRWAYS (56)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	57
23 LUFTHANSA (45)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	57
24 NORTHWEST AIRLINES (67)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	56
25 QANTAS (223)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	56
26 BA CONNECT <sup>b</sup> (52)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	54
27 AIR FRANCE (101)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	53
28 AMERICAN AIRLINES (367)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	52
29 THOMSONFLY (183)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	52
30 GULF AIR (34)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	50
31 SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS (132)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	49
32 UNITED AIRLINES (136)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	48
33 AIR CHINA (35)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	47
34 AIR TRANSAT (63)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	46
35 MONARCH AIRLINES (137)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	41
36 US AIRWAYS (67)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	40
37 XL AIRWAYS (83)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	40
38 FLY GLOBESPAN (93)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	37
39 MYTRAVEL AIRWAYS <sup>c</sup> (70)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	35
40 THOMAS COOK AIRLINES (188)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	34
41 AIR INDIA (36)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	32
42 IBERIA (113)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	27

### USING THE TABLES

The more stars the better. Sample sizes shown in brackets.

**Cabin staff** Helpfulness of cabin staff. **Pre-flight** Helpfulness of check-in staff, ease of online

check in (if applicable), baggage policies, and seat allocation. **Cleanliness** Cleanliness of aircraft interior and toilets. **Comfort** Amount of leg room and seat comfort. **Dealing with delays** How well airline dealt with delays (if applicable).

**Entertainment** Quality of in-flight entertainment (if applicable). **Food** Quality of food provided (if applicable). **Value for money** How the flight was rated for value for money. **Customer satisfaction score** A combination of overall

## Short-haul airlines

	CABIN STAFF	PRE-FLIGHT	CLEANLINESS	COMFORT	DEALING WITH DELAYS	ENTERTAINMENT	FOOD	VALUE FOR MONEY	CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SCORE (%)
1 PALMAIR (72)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	80
2 GERMANWINGS (35)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	78
3 AIR BERLIN (89)	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★★	76
4 AURIGNY (32)	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	72
5 AUSTRIAN AIRLINES (72)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	★★★★★	72
6 WIZZ AIR (35)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★★	69
7 SWISS INT'L AIRLINES (152)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★★	67
8 LUFTHANSA (208)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	64
9 AER LINGUS (316)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	63
10 AIR MALTA (254)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	61
11 CYPRUS AIRWAYS (92)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	61
12 JET2.COM (563)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	61
13 EASYJET (3,273)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	59
14 FLYBE (874)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	59
15 KLM (219)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	59
16 SAS SCANDINAVIAN AIRLINES (140)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	59
17 BMIBABY (554)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	58
18 CZECH AIRLINES (30)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	58
19 ICELANDAIR (57)	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	58
20 GB AIRWAYS <sup>d</sup> (474)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	57
21 TURKISH AIRLINES (64)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	56
22 BMI (BRITISH MIDLAND) (392)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	55
23 BRITISH AIRWAYS (2,487)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	55
24 CROATIA AIRLINES (33)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	55
25 OLYMPIC AIRWAYS (60)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	55
26 BA CONNECT <sup>b</sup> (127)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	54
27 FLY GLOBESPAN (282)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	53
28 AIR FRANCE (147)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	51
29 CATHAY PACIFIC (37)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	51
30 EGYPTAIR (71)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	51
31 MONARCH AIRLINES (1,090)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	50
32 THOMSONFLY (1,743)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	48
33 RYANAIR (2,081)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	47
34 TAP AIR PORTUGAL (134)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	47
35 ASTRAEUS (72)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	46
36 XL AIRWAYS (345)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	43
37 AIR EUROPA (48)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	42
38 FIRST CHOICE AIRWAYS (726)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	42
39 CYPRUS TURKISH AIRLINES (41)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	39
40 MYTRAVEL AIRWAYS <sup>c</sup> (194)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	39
41 IBERIA (115)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	38
42 ALITALIA (99)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	see <sup>a</sup>	★★★★	★★★★	37
43 THOMAS COOK AIRLINES (746)	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	37

<sup>a</sup> Sample size not large enough to rate   <sup>b</sup> Now owned by FlyBe   <sup>c</sup> Now merged with Thomas Cook Airlines   <sup>d</sup> Now owned by EasyJet

satisfaction and the likelihood of recommending the airline to a friend. Airlines with equal scores are listed in alphabetical order.

## Key

■ = Excellent   ■ = Good   ■ = Satisfactory   ■ = Poor   ■ = Very poor