



# Travel Watcher

INSIDER NEWS & NOTES FROM YOUR BUSINESS TRAVEL AUTHORITY

AUGUST 2011

## ✈ UP IN THE AIR

### American Airlines Offers Five-Star Service

American Airlines is expanding its “five-star” vacation service for fliers who want to travel like celebrities and VIPs. The personal one-on-one airport assistance program, which pampers ticket holders from curbside to boarding, will now be offered in 14 airports worldwide.

Personal AA representatives will coordinate with a customer’s car service, meet them at curbside or arrival gate, assist at check-in and with baggage, expedite customers through security, provide access to the Admirals Club lounge and escort customers to the gate and assist with pre-boarding.

Five Star Service costs \$125 per person, \$200 for two people. International rates are \$200 for one to two people, with \$125 per each additional person. Special pricing is available for larger groups. Immediate family members under the 18 may accompany the paying Five Star adult at no additional charge. The service is now being offered in Boston, Chicago O’Hare, Dallas Fort Worth, Miami, Los Angeles, New York JFK & LaGuardia, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Buenos Aires, London Heathrow, Milan, Tokyo-Narita and Sao Paulo. For more information, contact your travel agent or visit [www.aa.com/fivestarservice](http://www.aa.com/fivestarservice).

### TSA Takes Steps Enhance Passenger Privacy

As part of its ongoing vow to

maintain high security standards while also improving passenger experience at checkpoints, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Administrator John S. Pistole announced that TSA will begin installing new software on TSA’s millimeter wave Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) machines—making upgrades designed to increase efficiency and enhance privacy by eliminating passenger-specific images.

This new software will auto-detect items that could pose a potential threat using a generic outline of a person for all passengers. By eliminating the image of an actual passenger and replacing it with a generic outline of a person, passengers are able to view the same outline that the TSA officer sees. Further, a separate TSA officer will no longer be required to view the image in a remotely located viewing room. For more information, visit [www.tsa.gov/ait](http://www.tsa.gov/ait)

### Airport V.I.P. Lounges for the Rest of Us

The situation is painfully familiar: throngs of hassled travelers crowd an airport terminal, seating is scarce, power outlets are taken, food options are slim (and fattening), and grating announcements constant.

And yet, through double doors awaits a quiet oasis with comfortable leather lounge chairs, fresh fruit and free sandwiches. People relax with shoes off and feet propped up on coffee tables. All of this could be yours at a growing number of airports for \$15 to \$50, no matter

what class you fly or what membership card you carry. Both AmEx and Diner’s Club have benefits with top-of-the-line cards offering free lounge access at some airlines and independent clubs. Airports are offering comfy clubs open to all travelers willing to pay an entry fee for plush seating, Wi-Fi, bag storage, food, drinks and, in some cases, showers and alcohol. They have found that many business travelers have given up their airline-club memberships or have lost privileges by trading down to coach. Some passengers will splurge for a better way to ride out long airport waits, especially when bad weather cancels flights.

Independent lounges have replaced clubs abandoned by cost-cutting airlines or opened up new spaces in New York, Baltimore; Miami, Dallas-Fort Worth, LAX, Green Bay, and Savannah.

## HOTEL NEWS

### Goings on at Hilton

Hilton Hotels & Resorts has introduced a new lobby prototype that they will be installing at all their properties worldwide. The new lobbies will feature accessible technology, contemporary food and beverage offerings and an “environment for community engagement.”

The first test property is the Hilton McLean in Tyson’s Corner, VA. The lobby will have a living room feel that encourages a social atmosphere where guests can interact, work, collaborate or relax.

The centerpiece is an 18-hour bar that evolves throughout the day serving coffee, select food items and specialty cocktails. A dedicated technology lounge updates the traditional business center by bringing the space front and center. The check-in desk has also been transformed, with pod-style front desks that allow staff and guests to interact more directly.

## Marriott Drops Asia/Pac Internet Fees For Loyalty Members

Marriott International is dropping Internet access fees for all rewards program members at properties across most of its brands in the Asia/Pacific region. Effective immediately, the perk applies to rewards members staying at JW Marriott, Marriott, Renaissance and Courtyard properties in Australia, China, Hong Kong, Guam, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Although Internet access fees remain the norm at upscale hotels, Marriott and other multi-brand hotel companies increasingly have moved toward waiving the fees for preferred guests.

## TECHNOLOGY CORNER

### Are mobile devices now travel essentials?

TripAdvisor released a survey about travelers' use of mobile devices showing that they have quickly established an extremely important place in the overall scheme of travel. The survey found that although the most frequent use was to make/receive calls and texts, almost two-thirds of the respondents downloaded and used at least one specialized travel app:

While traveling: 62% use their mobile device to research restaurants, 51% check flight status, 46% research destination attractions, 59% use their mobile device's GPS function, and 47% have used their devices internationally. In addition, Several VNC (Virtual Network Computing) apps enable you to control Mac, Windows, or Linux computers; recent trade postings list Pro 2.0 (\$4.99, [www.hipporemove.com](http://www.hipporemove.com)), iTeleport (\$24.95, [www.iteleportmobile.com](http://www.iteleportmobile.com)), and Remote Jr. (\$7.99, [www.remotehd.com](http://www.remotehd.com)) for iPhone and iPad; Remote Droid (\$1.99; [www.remotedroid.net](http://www.remotedroid.net)) and Gmote (shareware, [www.gmote.org](http://www.gmote.org)) for Android, and MoBiMouse (\$5.99, [www.mobimouse.mobi/](http://www.mobimouse.mobi/)) for BlackBerry. VNC apps require that you install a corresponding VNC program on your computer and may require a minor tweak on your router.

## ECONOMIC NOTES

### Online agencies losing share value

Reuters—Orbitz Worldwide Inc's quarterly net loss more than doubled as its U.S. consumer business underperformed. The company said some airlines are changing their marketing to route shoppers to their own sites rather than Orbitz. The company—which also operates Cheaptickets.com—said its first-quarter net loss amounted to \$10.9 million, or 11 cents per share.

Dow Jones—Expedia Inc.'s first-quarter earnings fell 12% despite strong revenue growth, as their adjusted profit inched lower than expected. The company—which also operates Hotels.com and Hotwire.com—claimed quarterly net profit fell on increased expenses related to technology investments and international expansion.

## THE GREAT ESCAPE

### World's 50 Best Restaurants 2011

S. Pellegrino survey. Your Protravel agent can help get you there!

Rank	Restaurant	Country
1	<a href="#">Noma</a>	Denmark
2	<a href="#">El Celler De Can Roca</a>	Spain
3	<a href="#">Mugaritz</a>	Spain
4	<a href="#">Osteria Francescana</a>	Italy
5	<a href="#">The Fat Duck</a>	UK
6	<a href="#">Alinea</a>	USA
7	<a href="#">D.O.M</a>	Brazil
8	<a href="#">Arzak</a>	Spain
9	<a href="#">Le Chateaubriand</a>	France
10	<a href="#">Per Se</a>	USA
11	<a href="#">Daniel</a>	USA
12	<a href="#">Les Creations de Narisawa</a>	Japan
13	<a href="#">L'Astrance</a>	France
14	<a href="#">L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon</a>	France
15	<a href="#">Hof van Cleve</a>	Belgium
16	<a href="#">Pierre Gagnaire</a>	France
17	<a href="#">Oud Sluis</a>	Netherlands
18	<a href="#">Le Bernardin</a>	USA
19	<a href="#">L'Arpege</a>	France
20	<a href="#">Nihonryori RyuGin</a>	Japan
21	<a href="#">Vendome</a>	Germany
22	<a href="#">Steirereck</a>	Austria
23	<a href="#">Schloss Schauenstein</a>	Switzerland
24	<a href="#">Eleven Madison Park</a>	USA
25	<a href="#">Aqua</a>	Germany
26	<a href="#">Quay</a>	Australia
27	<a href="#">Iggly's</a>	Singapore
28	<a href="#">Combal Zero</a>	Italy
29	<a href="#">Martin Berasategui</a>	Spain
30	<a href="#">Bras</a>	France
31	<a href="#">Biko</a>	Mexico
32	<a href="#">Le Calandre</a>	Italy
33	<a href="#">Cracco</a>	Italy
34	<a href="#">The Ledbury</a>	UK
35	<a href="#">Chez Dominique</a>	Finland
36	<a href="#">Le Quartier Francais</a>	South Africa
37	<a href="#">Amber</a>	Hong Kong
38	<a href="#">Dal Pescatore</a>	Italy
39	<a href="#">Il Canto</a>	Italy
40	<a href="#">Momofuku Ssam Bar</a>	USA
41	<a href="#">St John</a>	UK
42	<a href="#">Astrid Y Gaston</a>	Peru
43	<a href="#">Hibiscus</a>	UK
44	<a href="#">Maison Troisgros</a>	France
45	<a href="#">Alain Ducasse au Plaza Athenee</a>	France
46	<a href="#">De Librije</a>	Netherlands
47	<a href="#">Restaurant de l'Hotel De Ville</a>	Switzerland
48	<a href="#">Varvray</a>	Russia
49	<a href="#">Pujol</a>	Mexico
50	<a href="#">Asador Etxebarri</a>	Spain

FYI: International tourist spending in the US rose 18% in May 2011 to \$12.6 billion.