JetBlue eliminates change fees on most fares — with a major catch

- On Tuesday, the New York-based carrier announced that its eliminating change fees on most fares, following similar moves made by other major U.S. airlines roughly six months ago.
- However, unlike its competition, JetBlue’s announcement comes with a big devaluation: basic economy flyers will no longer be allowed to bring a carry-on bag.
- Blue Basic tickets will include a small personal item, like a purse or backpack, that can fit underneath the seat. Full-sized carry-ons, like rollaboards, will no longer be accepted.
- Those traveling with carry-on bags will be forced to check them. JetBlue currently charges Blue Basic customers $35 for the first checked bag and $45 for the second one. Mosaics and eligible cobranded credit cardholders will continue to enjoy free checked bags, as per previous policy.
- If you’ve purchased Blue Basic and want to bring a carry-on bag, your only option is to purchase an extra-legroom Even More Space seat, which will soon allow basic economy flyers to bring a full-sized carry-on. Mosaic elite members will be allowed to bring a carry-on bag regardless of the fare purchased. Non-elite customers won’t be allowed to “upgrade” to Blue fares without paying the $100 or $200 change/cancel fee.
- This move now puts JetBlue’s Blue Basic offering on par with its ultra-low-cost rivals like Frontier and Spirit, and with United, which currently offers the most punitive basic economy experience of the major U.S. airlines.
- The no-change-fee policy will apply to all JetBlue fares, except for those booked in Blue Basic, the carrier’s version of basic economy. Going forward, eligible flights can be changed or canceled at any time before departure.
- This doesn’t mean that JetBlue tickets will suddenly become refundable. All voluntary changes will be credited to the digital Travel Bank, and funds can be used within a year of issuance for any traveler.

TSA screened almost 4 million people over holiday weekend

- According to the federal agency’s latest checkpoint travel numbers, 3.9 million people passed through security screening between Friday and Monday. The number marks the second-busiest weekend so far this year, following 4.4 million screened between Jan. 1 (New Year’s Day) and Jan. 4.
- "While we saw weekend passenger volumes that exceeded 4 million airline passengers, this still represents about 40% of the pre-pandemic passenger volumes," a spokesperson said Tuesday.
- Airports across America were also bustling over the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend last month, with 3.2 million screened between Jan. 15 and Jan. 18, according to the TSA.
**CDC is not recommending a Covid-19 test requirement before domestic travel**

- The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is not recommending a Covid-19 testing requirement before domestic air travel, the CDC tells CNN.
- "At this time, CDC is not recommending required point of departure testing for domestic travel," according to a CDC statement sent to CNN Friday night. "As part of our close monitoring of the pandemic, in particular the continued spread of variants, we will continue to review public health options for containing and mitigating spread of COVID-19 in the travel space."
- The CDC added that it does not recommend that people travel at this time.
- "If someone must travel, they should get tested with a viral test 1-3 days before the trip," the agency said. "After travel, getting tested with a viral test 3-5 days post-travel and staying home and self-quarantining for 7 days, even if test results are negative, is a recommended public health measure to reduce risk."

**'We don't see a clear exit strategy.' The travel industry is still getting crushed**

- "The world is more locked down today than at virtually any point in the past 12 months and passengers face a bewildering array of rapidly changing and globally uncoordinated travel restrictions," IATA CEO Alexandre de Juniac said in a statement this month, adding that airlines will need continued financial support from governments to remain viable.
- Why it matters: It's not just airlines at stake. Thousands of companies rely on travel and tourism to earn an income. These firms employed 330 million people globally in 2019, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). The industry body estimates more than half of these workers have been laid off or are currently on furlough.
- "We don't see a clear exit strategy," WTTC CEO Gloria Guevara told me. "It's easy to close borders, but not that easy to open them."

**U.S. Department of Transportation Announces Nearly $2 Billion Grant Program for COVID Relief to Airports**

- The U.S. Department of Transportation is making nearly $2 billion in federal grant funding available to help airports affected by COVID-19 under the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) Airport Coronavirus Response Grant Program.
- The program is funded under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2020. It is available to more than 3,000 commercial service, reliever and publically owned general-aviation airports in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems.
- Most of the funds will go toward helping keep people safe and in jobs by reimbursing operational expenses, debt service payments and costs related to combating the spread of pathogens at the airport. The program also includes money for rent relief to airport concessions and to support FAA contract towers for items such as cleaning and sanitizing facilities affected by COVID-19 cases.
- Airports must apply for the grants by June 30.
CANADA ANNOUNCES 3 TESTS AND NEW HOTEL QUARANTINE RULES

• New restrictions for incoming travelers to Canada including a new hotel quarantine and three Covid-19 tests will begin on February 22 announced Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday.
• Click here for full details.

England hotel quarantine begins for arrivals from high-risk countries

• UK nationals and residents must pay for a 10-day stay in government-approved hotels from Monday.
• People returning to England from 33 “red list” countries – comprised of hotspots with Covid-19 variants in circulation – will be required to quarantine in hotels for 10 days.
• Anyone who has been in one of the high-risk destinations will have to enter England through a designated port and have pre-booked a quarantine package to stay at one of the government’s managed quarantine facilities.
• The government has struck deals with 16 hotels so far, providing 4,963 rooms, and a further 58,000 rooms are on standby, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) said on Sunday.

Hong Kong Disneyland Announces Third Reopening Date

• Late Tuesday evening, Disney announced that Hong Kong Disneyland will reopen to guests on Friday, February 19th.
• The Resort has [most recently] been closed since December 2, 2020. This will be the third reopening of the Resort since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Royal Caribbean adds COVID-19 into cruise contract for all passengers

• Royal Caribbean has updated its Cruise Contract with new language related to the current global health crisis at some point in the last few months.
• Section 4 of the contract used to cover simply "medical care and other personal services" has been updated to now cover "public health, COVID-19 policies and procedures, knowing acceptance of the risks".