

Travelers Face Deep Flight Cuts by Summer's End

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With summer barely under way, it may seem too early for travelers to start thinking about Labor Day. But that is when significant cuts in the airlines' fleets and schedules will begin taking effect, making for a particularly jarring end to summer.

Across the United States, airports from La Guardia in New York to Oakland in California will be affected by flight cuts, bringing the industry down to a size last seen in 2002, when travel fell sharply after the 9/11 attacks.

Over all, the cuts will reduce flights this year by American carriers by almost 10 percent, industry analysts estimate, with even deeper cuts in store for 2009.

And if oil prices keep rising, airlines may have to keep paring their schedules, as they struggle to find ways to make money in light of rapidly rising jet fuel prices, which have climbed more than 80 percent in the last year.

This week, the country's two biggest airlines, American and United, announced plans to lop cities like Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and San Luis Obispo, Calif., out of their networks. Cuts also are taking place on international routes to cities like London and Buenos Aires, and even to popular vacation destinations in the United States like Las Vegas, Honolulu and Orlando.

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