



## Latest Top 10 List

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### Top 10 Airline Websites

Website	Design	Navig.	Customer Service	Features	Total
1. US Airways	5.0	4.0	4.0	5.0	<b>4.50</b>
2. United	5.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	<b>4.25</b>
3. Continental Airlines	4.0	5.0	4.0	3.5	<b>4.13</b>
4. Delta Air	5.0	4.0	4.0	3.0	<b>4.00</b>
5. Swissair	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	<b>3.75</b>
6. TWA	4.0	3.0	4.0	3.5	<b>3.63</b>
7. KLM	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	<b>3.50</b>
8. Air Canada	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.5	<b>3.38</b>
9. Japan Airlines	3.0	3.0	2.0	5.0	<b>3.25</b>
10. Virgin	3.0	2.5	4.0	3.0	<b>3.13</b>
<b>Top Score = 5.00</b>			<i>Source: eMarketer 2000</i>		

"I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move."

### Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)

**August 2000.** As it has with just about everything else, the internet has become a significant force in airline travel -- and it's happened in a relatively short amount of time. That having been said, there is still a great deal of work to be done; technology still can't "beam" you to Paris. But it can provide an infinite number of options to fly you there. Consequently, we are entering a historic period for the online travel services.

First came the reverse auctions of Priceline, Travelocity, and Expedia. Now, with the arrival this fall of Hotwire.com and Orbitz, the landscape of the \$300 billion travel industry figures to undergo a major facelift. Both sites are sponsored by major carriers, and over 20 smaller airlines are set to join as affiliates. Both also aim to offer customers a more complete list of schedules and fares.

These services will address a problem that has long plagued the airlines as an estimated 3.5 million airline seats go unfilled every week. While Priceline has helped, it only sells roughly 100,000 seats per week. The new conglomerate sites could increase that efficiency, benefiting airlines and consumers alike. You get a cheaper ticket and the airline sells a seat that may otherwise have gone unsold.

Sounds pretty good, huh?

Well, maybe not. With the major airlines in bed together, all sorts of anti-competitive practices become possible. In the long run this gives the airlines even more "power to drive up prices in the long run," says Ed Rothschild, spokesman for the Interactive Travel Services Association in Washington. Even former presidential hopeful and veep hope-not, Senator John McCain, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, got into the fold arguing, "There are clear antitrust implications with the airlines ... running one Web site. If each airline wanted to run one, then that would be another matter, but I think it's a great danger that could lead to higher airfares for average passengers." Many expect the US Justice Department to take a look at the charges of anticompetitive practices already being lobbed from many industry insiders. (As for Orbitz, there's no need to wait: the Justice Department's investigation is already under way.)

So, while the Justice Department sorts through the mess of consolidated airline ticket sites, eMarketer has addressed the one thing that more than likely won't change: the individual sites of the airlines. These sites are perhaps less crucial for branding purposes, since most travelers select flights according to fare and schedule as opposed to corporate identity or loyalty. However, for the business traveler or frequent flier the individual sites are the primary means of contact and interaction prior to checking the bags.

Do you have a question or concern about the top 10 list?

Discuss it on the [eBoards](#) 

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## **The Evaluation Process**

We considered over 150 official airline websites and used several sources in obtaining site addresses. Among those used, the Federal Aviation Administration provided perhaps the most complete listing of links to official airline sites.

In ranking the sites, we made every attempt to judge international and regional airlines against the same specific criteria.

The specific criteria were as follows:

- 1) Design: Does the site make good use of color and images? Is the home page well laid out? In other words, can the user get as much of the experience from the home page or is the home page just another page for the user to get through?
- 2) Navigation: Can the user find different parts of the site easily and in different ways (i.e. is the site over-reliant on the search function to get the user to the different features)? How well does the site move the user through the reservation process? Do the pages take too long to upload, giving the user ample opportunity to abandon the reservation process?

3) Customer Service: Is there an e-mail/toll-free number prominently displayed? Does the site provide information concerning lost baggage? Does the site provide live assistance on the site?

4) Features: Does the site make good use of available technology in assisting the user? Does the site provide links to area weather? Does the site provide links to hotels and car rental agencies?

Each site received a rating between one and 5 for each of these criteria; the overall rating is an average of all the scores.