TRUE OR FALSE: TEST YOUR AIR TRAVEL KNOWLEDGE

News / Airlines

There’s always a lot of confusion about the air travel news these days—mainly because things change fast. Let’s face it, carriers are trying to keep profits up while balancing issues of government regulations and security. So, let’s take a quiz and see how up to date you are on the latest changes that may affect you as traveler. You might be surprised to find that things you might have thought to be true and are actually not.

U.S. airlines have just raised prices.

True. Airlines made a ton of money last year. According to data from the U.S. Department of Transportation, the largest U.S. carriers reported net income of $9.3 billion in the third quarter of 2015 alone. Nevertheless, Delta launched a fare hike on Jan. 4 and other carriers quickly joined in to match the increase. Before you start wondering if you can still go on vacation this year, the increase was a paltry $3 one-way. On the other hand, the success of the hike will likely spur more attempts.

Your driver's license could be useless as an ID at the airport this year.

False. January 2016 was the original deadline for states to comply with federal law that included stricter standards for driver's licenses. Some states didn't (Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, Washington) and there was speculation folks from these areas would need passports to

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get through airport security. But late last week the Department of Homeland Security pushed back the state compliance deadline until 2018. By the way, if you ever lose your driver's license and need to fly you can still get through Transportation Security Administration security with a valid passport, state-issued ID card or membership in trusted traveler programs such as Global Entry.

You can fly your favorite airline to Cuba this year.

Possibly true. After December's announcement that the U.S. and Cuba agreed to begin regularly-scheduled flights between the two countries, airlines like American, Delta JetBlue and United expressed delight. Officials are still working out the details like safety inspections and other procedures. But no airline has yet to unveil a Havana flight schedule. I predict flights by the end of the year at the latest. If you want to go sooner, you can always fly a charter but remember that Cuba travel is still banned for purely tourism reasons although travel agents can set you up with educational or cultural groups that are within the law.

Baggage fees remain the worst fees of all.

False. This is a matter of opinion of course but I think a $200 ticket change fee (charged by several U.S. airlines) is far worse than any $25 checked-bag fee. Of course, you can always fly Southwest which doesn't charge you for either one but here's another way: be as certain of your travel dates as humanly possible and to pack light. Remember, a free bag isn't so great when the airline loses it.

The drone I got for Christmas is the best toy ever.

False. It may have been the best thing under the tree, but according to the Federal Aviation Administration, it's not really a toy. Blame it on too many dangerously close calls between drones and airplanes which is why the FAA now requires most drones to be registered and owners must follow other rules like no flights above 400 feet, near stadiums or within five miles of airports.

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