



CAPACITY CRISIS AT UK AIRPORTS REVEALED BY DELAYS LEAGUE

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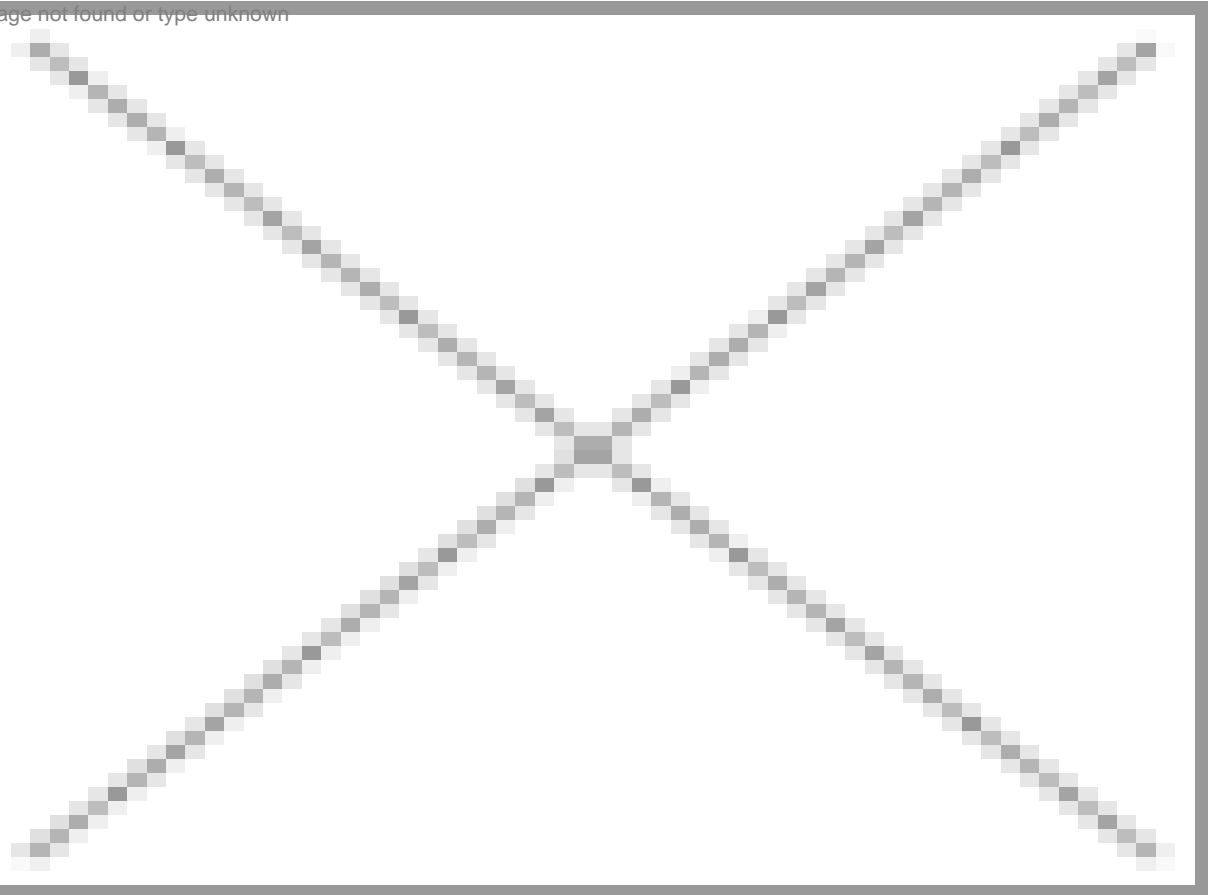


The capacity squeeze at Britain's overcrowded airports and need for a new runway in the South East has been highlighted by data revealing punctuality in the airline industry.

At Heathrow - the UK's busiest airport and the most likely site of a new runway - more than a quarter of all take-offs and landings in 2015 took place more than 15 minutes outside their scheduled slot.

Gatwick, which is still campaigning to add another landing strip despite failing to win the backing of the Airports Commission, is the worst performer among Britain's major airports, with only 65pc of flights on time.

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Heathrow could

get a new runway to the north-west of its existing ones

The data from aviation analysts OAG revealed that passengers flying in or out of Britain who want to be on time should try to travel through Bristol airport, where 88.6pc of flights are on time, making it the country's most punctual airport.

However, this solid schedule performance pales in comparison to Tokyo Haneda airport, where 91.3pc of flights were on time despite it being a major international hub, with far more flights than Bristol. The Japanese airport handled about 400,000 take-offs and landings last year compared with about 65,000 at Bristol, according to Civil Aviation Authority data.

By comparison, Heathrow had 471,000 aircraft movements during the year and Gatwick saw 249,000.

John Grant, senior analyst at OAG, said: "Runway capacity continues to be an issue for the UK. On time performance at Heathrow and Gatwick are both down on [the previous] year, a real reflection of how far they are stretched for capacity.

"Both airports have worked hard in the past few years to fill off-peak hours, but they have now almost reached full use."

OAG's analysis also revealed the UK-based airlines most likely to meet their allotted arrival and departure slots. British Airways may have once billed itself as the world's favourite airline but it far from the most punctual, with 77.3pc of flights on schedule - though this was marginal improvement on the previous year.

However, as Britain's flag-carrier, BA operates mainly out of overcrowded Heathrow and into many major hubs that suffer from similar capacity issues, which are thought to be a factor in its poor performance.

A British Airways plane

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British Airways' performance was hampered by its basing at Heathrow Photo: Getty Images

Monarch was the top rated of the UK-based airlines ranked by OAG at 88.2pc, though it operates far fewer flights and often from less busy airfields where congestion is less likely to be an issue.

The data do not include Virgin, as OAG only ranks airlines in its punctuality league if they provide departure and arrival information for at least 80pc of their scheduled flights.

Also just below this 80pc threshold was Ryanair, Europe's biggest low-cost carrier. Had it met the requirements, its punctuality level of 88.7pc for flight arrivals would have placed it 11th in the top global 20 airlines category, OAG said.

On a global basis, Latvian airline Air Baltic retained the title of the world's most punctual airline, hitting 94.4pc of its schedule.

Capturing and ranking on-time performance plays a "valuable" role in aviation, according to OAG, which can drive airlines and airports to implement changes to deliver improvements.

"It is a powerful key performance indicator as well as a potential service differentiator for travellers," said Mr Grant. "An airline's schedule is a key element of what the traveller is buying – passengers need to be able to plan around realistic and reliable arrival times and connecting time requirements.

"Prudent expectation setting means keeping schedules realistic in the face of increasingly congested hub airports, to help the integrity of that airline's entire schedule."

SOURCE: THE TELEGRAPH

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