

TIPS FOR A GOOD BUDGET EXPERIENCE

In the past few years, the popularity of low-cost carriers (LCCs) as a cheaper alternative to existing airlines has risen. We talk to Jetstar Asia and Tiger Airways, two of Asia's top LCCs, for their insights on what their passengers should know and expect to ensure a good flight experience every time.

In general, what are the basic services and amenities that the passenger ought to expect from a budget airline?



Tiger Airways: At Tiger Airways, passengers can always expect the lowest possible fares, which other airlines try to beat. Passengers can also choose to pay for other things they really want, such as luggage upsize, extra leg room, seat selection, travel insurance, food & beverage and duty-free goods among others.

Jetstar Asia: With Jetstar, passengers are offered flexibility with the options they can choose from. They can expect to pay for only what they use and need. Passengers can also expect the lowest airfares on any of the routes we travel. All our fares are covered by a Price Beat Guarantee which means that if a customer finds a lower fare on the same route, on the same day and at a comparable time, we will beat that fare by 10 per cent.

The unbundling of amenities have caused mixed reactions. Some like it, and some are vocal against it. Why is it to the advantage of the passenger to have amenities and services unbundled? Shouldn't these be part of the whole "flight experience"?

Tiger Airways: With bundling, everyone ends up paying more and effectively subsidising other people who want everything in the bundle such as meals, alcohol and 20kg check-in luggage. With unbundling, passengers save money as they only pay for what they really want. For instance, at Tiger Airways, you have the best range of options for check-in luggage including 0kg (hand carry only), 15kg, 20kg, 25kg, 30kg.

Jetstar Asia: Jetstar is all about choice, where our customers only pay for what they use and what they need. The main advantage for Jetstar passengers is that they can choose the travel experience they want and know they are only paying for what they need.

LCCs generally hold promotions where they lower the prices of their flights even further. While these offers have generally been met with enthusiasm by consumers, some have had bad experiences due to “hidden costs” they incur when they opt for it. What should passengers watch out for when considering a special promotion?

Tiger Airways: During the booking process, we list the costs clearly for passengers to see before accepting. Some airlines may advertise lower lead-in fares, but there could be much fewer seats at those prices. It's always good to check prices across different airlines.

Jetstar Asia: All Jetstar fares are inclusive of surcharges fees and taxes so if we advertise a special low fare as part of a sale, what is advertised is what is paid.

All carriers – budget or otherwise – have a baggage allowance limit. Some airlines exercise flexibility at check-in and may not impose overweight charges if the passenger’s luggage is just slightly over the stated limit. What is your airline’s baggage allowance policy?



Tiger Airways: The prices are communicated clearly during the booking process. To ensure consistency in our policy, pricing is not left to the discretion of our check-in crew. We state clearly the amount of hand-carry luggage allowed free, the wide range of luggage upsize options and the charges for excess baggage at the airport. With the best range of luggage options and our low fares, it makes sense for passengers to book in advance and pay

for the luggageoption best suited to their needs.

Jetstar Asia: All our baggage allowance policies are made clear on our website. Jetstar allows up to 10kg of carry-on luggage which is more than most carriers, which only allow 7kg. We offer two fares – one with check-in baggage and one without. The check-in allowance is 20 kg for those checking in on JetSaver fares. We also have prepaid excess baggage allowance should you require more than the 20kg baggage allowance that we provide for JetSaver fare. The important thing for travellers is to be realistic about their luggage requirements and purchase the ticket that will best suit their needs, rather than having to pay extra at the airport.

Complaints about bad service – from customer service to inflight service – in budget airlines have become all too common these days. Why do you think this is?

Tiger Airways: Budget travel is a relatively new concept in Asia Pacific, compared to developed markets like Europe. Also, it has grown tremendously over the past few years. With an increase in volume, the number of complaints will naturally increase as well. However, at Tiger Airways, we have been receiving fewer complaints as a percentage of our passengers. Since setting up a Customer Task Force last year, we have been implementing customer service enhancements in various areas including our web interface, inflight service and most recently our call centre.



Jetstar Asia: Every service provider needs to be able to manage customer feedback. Recently we introduced the Jetstar Customer Guarantee which clearly and publicly outlines our commitment to service all the way through the travellers' experience with us. The 10-point commitment is available on our [website](#) and outlines how we handle and respond to all customer feedback and what we will do if we do not reach our own personal

standards. We have a dedicated 24/7 Customer Care Team who is committed to responding to all our customer queries. Our Customer Care Team is also well versed with knowledge of our company's regulations and policies and is equipped to explaining and explore all alternate Jetstar options available to our customers. True to our promise of service, should we fail to meet this commitment, we will provide a \$50 Jetstar travel voucher.

There have been numerous cases of passengers getting bumped off flights or flights getting cancelled. What are your airline's policies regarding this? What should the passenger do when faced with this situation?

Tiger Airways: For cancellations or schedule changes of more than four hours, passengers can opt to do any of the following: go on another available flight without additional charge and, where necessary, extend the validity of their booking; retain the value of their fare in a credit account for future travel provided they re-book within six months; or receive a refund, subject to terms and conditions. In the case of cancellations, we always try to inform passengers of the change through email/phone. And if the flight is overbooked, and the passenger is unable to board a flight where he/she is confirmed, we'll compensate the passenger based on our denied boarding [policy](#).



Jetstar Asia: Flight cancellations affect all airlines – full service and budget – and can be caused by a number of reasons – weather, mechanical issues or even volcanoes! The important thing for consumers is to know how the airline will look after you if flights don't go according to plan. Jetstar has recently announced its Jetstar Customer Promise which is a 10-point promise of what we will deliver our customers as an airline and particularly,

what our commitment is when things don't go according to plan. We are committed to making sure all our passengers can get in contact with us at any time.

Here's what we promise our passengers: that your safety is always our highest priority. When your flight schedule is affected, our team is always there to help, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. What the Jetstar team can do is keep you updated on the latest developments and also provide alternative travel options. We also respond quickly to an issue, alerting you of your available choices should your flight is changed before you travel.

Jetstar Asia has contact centres in the countries it services so you can be sure of reaching us wherever you are.

Going forward, what future innovations can passengers expect from your airline?

Tiger Airways: Even lower fares, to even more places. We can keep reducing our fares, yet grow our operations and profits, because we are truly disciplined in cost management without compromising safety. Other airlines who spend on lavish items such as expensive advertising campaigns and premium event sponsorships will find it hard to keep up with us. For instance, since we started our Hong Kong route in February, we have been leading the low-fare revolution and bringing prices down. We will also be introducing more measures to improve customer experience.

Jetstar Asia: Definitely more low fares to great destinations. Over the last year we have been growing our capacity from Singapore by 46 per cent with new services from Singapore to Penang, Phuket, Haikou and Shantou and more services to Ho Chi Minh City, Manila and Hong Kong. In Australia, we recently commenced services from Sydney to Fiji as well as services between Cairns and Osaka. We also recently launched services from Singapore to Osaka via Taipei to be operated by our 10th aircraft as part of Jetstar Asia's growth spurt of 46 per cent over the last 12 months.