

BURKHALTER TRAVEL NEWS: JANUARY 2020

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LATEST NEWS

- **Commercial airlines are rerouting flights throughout the Middle East** to avoid potential danger during heightened tensions between the United States and Iran. Jumbled schedules could affect as many as 15,000 passengers per day and **lengthen flight times by an average of 30 to 90 minutes**. Some of the airlines adjusting routes include **U.S. carriers, Poland's LOT, Air France and Dutch carrier KLM, Lufthansa, all major Russian airlines, Qantas, Singapore Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, China airlines, EVA Airlines, Air India** and others.
- **There is a warning for Americans traveling in areas of Israel and Palestine territories.** The US Embassy in Israel issued an advisory urging Americans to avoid traveling in areas of Israel and Palestinian-held territories including Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. "Out of an abundance of caution, the Embassy strongly encourages U.S. citizens to remain vigilant and take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness, as security incidents, including rocket fire, often take place without warning," the advisory reads.
- **Good news** if you're waiting for your **backlogged Global Entry Renewal application** to clear. (The backlog is now up to 350,000, according to Customs and Border Protection). **If you submitted your renewal before its expiration date** and it still has not been approved, **CBP has granted a year of extra time** during which you can continue to use the benefits of the program.
- A **key safety feature that Uber announced** last fall is **now available** to passengers of the ride-hailing service. The **Uber PIN safety feature** matches riders and drivers using four-digit Personal Identification Numbers. Look for more information [here](#).
- After **SuperShuttle and ExecuCar** shut down all services as of December 31, 2019, **GO Airport Shuttle**, a ground transportation company serving 85 airports worldwide, wants travelers to know that they can book shared rides, private cars and sedans, SUVs and charters through GO and its affiliates in many of SuperShuttle's locations. Read about it [here](#).
- **Two more international carriers honor PreCheck** privileges. Both **Alitalia** and **Qantas** now participate in PreCheck, bringing the total number of domestic and international carriers offering PreCheck to 73.
- **France's longest transportation strike** since 1985 has passed the 40 day mark, despite the government's offer to withdraw the most contested measure of the pension reform plans that sparked the protest. The strike has paralyzed Paris and its suburbs, with bus, train and metro services all badly disrupted.

TOOLS, TIPS AND TECHNOLOGY

- **RushMyPassport** is an **online U.S. passport courier service** that saves time and a trip to the passport office. It can expedite the delivery of a passport from one to 18 days, for a fee. The service recently announced a partnership with Mobile Passport Control, which utilizes apps authorized by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to permit users to access express immigration lanes at participating airports. Look for details [here](#).
- On January 1, 2020, **the name "Holland" disappeared from the world map**. The country is now known as 'The Netherlands.' While the official name change will cost the country's treasury €200,000, the Dutch government is confident that the 'investment' will pay off. They expect the change to "redistribute the tourist flow."
- **Experts on consumer fraud** advise that check-writers and contract signers **should not abbreviate the date in 2020**. Why? They suggest that 'unscrupulous individuals' could add an extra two digits to a contract or other document to change the start date, or backdate a check that would not be accepted by the recipient's bank. For example, the handwritten date "1/5/20" can easily be changed to "1/5/2021" or "1/5/2019."
- Periodic reviewing of your cell phone's international roaming charges is a good idea. Here's a [cautionary tale](#) from consumer advocate Chris Elliott about what can happen if you don't.
- Do you collect and transfer points? This [resource](#) can be useful.

AIRLINE UPDATES

ALASKA AIRLINES

- Health-minded Alaska Airlines passengers can enjoy **Seattle favorite Evergreens' Beets So Fly salad** on coast-to-coast and Hawaii flights through March 15. Beets So Fly features romaine and mixed greens, pickled beets, pickled red onions, cucumbers, walnuts, feta and black pepper with Dijon balsamic dressing, served with roasted chicken.
- Here are [12 places you can Ski For Free](#) with your Alaska boarding pass.
- Alaska Airlines is cutting back and eliminating flights, especially those serving the West Coast. At San Diego, the airline just halted its non-stop service to [El Paso, Kansas City and Minneapolis-St. Paul](#).

AMERICAN AIRLINES

- American Airlines travelers will be able to get translation services via Google Nest Hubs and Google Assistant at its airport lounges in Los Angeles International Airport. The airline is taking advantage of apps and smart devices to provide more customized services to its passengers.
- American entered into a codeshare agreement with the Moroccan national carrier, Royal Air Maroc, beginning on Dec. 26. The carrier will begin offering seasonal service to Casablanca (CMN) from Boston starting June 4, making it the only U.S. carrier with nonstop service three times per week to Morocco. The codeshare will also expand offerings to other cities across the African continent beginning in early 2020.
- American has reached a confidential settlement with Boeing for financial losses related to the worldwide grounding of the 737 Max jet. While the terms are confidential, Doug Parker, American's CEO, said a portion - \$30 million - will be shared with employees through the company's profit-sharing plan. American has removed the jet from its schedule through April 6.
- The Points Guy reports American will end service to Cordoba, Argentina on May 6 due to continued demand weakness in the South American country.
- American Airlines has **opened an Admirals Club in Terminal E at Dallas Fort Worth Airport**. This marks American's fifth Admirals Club at DFW. They now have one in each of the five terminals — A, B, C, D, and E.

DELTA AIR LINES

- Delta Air Lines' CEO Ed Bastian unveiled several new technologies the airline plans to introduce in the next few years, bringing "magic" back to air travel. Speaking at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) recently, Bastian laid out the airline's plans to digitize and automate the travel experience using a variety of high-tech tools including artificial intelligence and machine learning. He also mentioned Delta's earlier promise to offer free Wi-Fi, without offering details on when it would be available.
- Delta has been talking about **reducing or eliminating change fees**, or providing additional value when they charge fees. Currently the standard ticket change fee on Delta is \$200, which is similar to what American and United charge. No word on when this might happen.
- Delta Air Lines has confirmed that it is **moving Beijing operations** to the newly opened Daxing (PKX) Airport. Effective March 29, flights to and from its Seattle/Tacoma and Detroit/Metro hubs will shift to Daxing from Beijing Capital (PEK).

SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

- Southwest has increased the number of complimentary in-flight entertainment options available to passengers. **For the month of January**, passengers will be able to access movies including

Avengers: Endgame, Crazy Rich Asians and John Wick: Chapter 3 – Parabellum on Wi-Fi enabled aircraft.

- While domestic flights will be the "primary" focus of Southwest's planned expansion of its service at Houston's William P. Hobby Airport, **the airline may also add destinations in Mexico, Latin America and the Caribbean**, CEO Gary Kelly said. "I think probably from Houston what would be most exciting ultimately is adding South America access," Kelly added. Some news sources are referring to his comments as "a tease."

UNITED AIRLINES

- United has announced a [MileagePlus Gift Card Exchange program](#) that will accept unwanted gift cards and apply their value to award miles. You need to be enrolled but the airline does allow you to join now by [filling out an online form](#). After a 90-day waiting period, you can begin trading in gift cards for miles. United will accept gift cards from certain retailers, fast food franchises, restaurants, even for fellow airlines American and Southwest. The gift cards must have at least a \$15 balance.
- **United has removed the grounded Boeing 737 Max** from its schedules **though June**.
- United Airlines' new "plane full of posh" campaign **promotes the luxury of its improved business class service to London**. Polaris class service from Chicago and Newark includes not only lie-flat seats but pre-flight dining, upgraded bedding and airport lounges with shower facilities.

INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES

- Travelmole reports that **China Southern Airlines** cut its ties with the SkyTeam global airline alliance on January 1, 2020 but will maintain existing codeshare arrangements with most SkyTeam members including Aeroflot, Air France, Delta Air Lines, Korean Air, and Vietnam Airlines. In addition to its SkyTeam airline partners, the company has accelerated the expansion of its global 'circle of friends' by establishing bilateral codeshare partnership with American Airlines, British Airways, Emirates, Finnair, Japan Airlines, Qantas and Qatar Airways. China Southern also plans to roll out a new frequent flyer program.
- **TAP Air Portugal** offers international business class passengers **a fabric amenity kit** with a Portuguese scene imprinted on it. Inside is a pair of socks in TAP's red-and-green color scheme. (One passenger said, "They were so nifty that I actually wore them off the plane.") The kit also contains a fragrance sachet meant to be placed with dirty clothes to keep them smelling fresh.
- **Japan Airlines** will add two daily flights between Honolulu and Tokyo/Haneda beginning March 28, the first time JAL has offered flights to Haneda from Hawaii since 1978, when it shifted international service to Narita. At Narita, JAL will cut its HNL-NRT service to two daily flights, down from its current four daily.

AIRPORT NEWS

- **New York's JFK** is making Google Assistant's Interpreter Mode technology available to international passengers at Terminal 4. The Google Nest hubs will be available at three help desk locations and offer translation in 29 languages to assist passengers with navigating the terminal and tasks such as locating luggage.
- **All of the smoking rooms in Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport** are **closed** as a city ban on smoking or vaping in the buildings went into effect.
- **Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport** has inaugurated a new \$2.2 million **Armed Forces Service Center** that provides a volunteer-staffed rest stop for members of the US armed forces and their families. It includes a lounge area, kitchenette, showers, bunks, a playroom for children and space for nursing mothers.
- **London Gatwick Airport** confirmed that following a self-boarding trial last year, facial-recognition will be used on a permanent basis for ID checks before passengers are allowed to board. Passports will still be required.
- **The Qantas First Class lounge in Sydney** has a new company providing **spa services** and it's getting rave reviews. Options include Lift Off (facial); Neck, Shoulder and Scalp Massage; Hot and Precious Stone Back Massage; and Foot Massage. Services are 20 minutes each.
- AirHelp compiled **a list of the world's best airports**, with Qatar's Hamad International Airport in Doha leading the pack. At the bottom were airports such as London Gatwick Airport and Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport in Canada.
- Missouri's **St. Louis Lambert International Airport** has signed a contract to bring the CLEAR biometric system to the airport, following 34 other airports in the US. The system uses fingerprints and irises to identify passengers who have paid for the program.
- **Seattle Sea-Tac** will be getting **new transpacific service** in the spring. **Philippine Airlines** has filed plans to inaugurate a new route between **Seattle and Manila** starting May 3, a flight of 12 to 13-1/2 hours.
- **Priority Pass** has added another lounge at **San Francisco**. The **Virgin Clubhouse on Concourse A** in SFO's International Terminal will accept Priority Pass cardholders between 6 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. daily.
- New side-by-side lounges have opened in Terminal 4 at **Phoenix/Sky Harbor Airport**. Partially located in the former home of The Club, the newly designed and expanded space offers the latest **American Express Centurion Lounge** and an **Escape Lounge**, available free to Amex Platinum cardholders or to any traveler for \$45 a visit.

HOTEL UPDATES

- **The TWA Hotel at John F. Kennedy International Airport** has opened a rooftop ski lodge adjacent to the hotel's rooftop pool. The Runway Chalet has the look of a 1960s ski lodge and will be open daily from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. local time. The pool will be open too, with a water temperature of 95° F. The menu at the Runway Chalet includes multiple hot beverages including a hot toddy with spiced rum, hot apple cider, and a cinnamon stick. The dining menu at the chalet includes cheese and chocolate fondue.
- Here's a **heads-up** from a traveler who has been **noticing mini-bar charges on his hotel bill** when he did not use the mini-bars. It took a phone call or two to get them removed. His advice: "If I was not paying close attention to my Amex card statement, these charges could have made it through. Pay attention!"
- More than 20 key metrics reviewed for **WalletHub's annual Hotel Rewards Report** reveal that **Wyndham Rewards** has the best hotel loyalty program, with **Radisson Rewards and Choice Privileges** also near the top. "Smaller players in the travel space often provide more incentives because they have to do so in order to compete with bigger names," WalletHub CEO Odysseas Papadimitriou says. You can read the Wallet Hub report [here](#).
- **A Nevada priest holds three masses each week inside the Riverside Resort Hotel and Casino** in Laughlin, Nevada and frequently sees casino chips and receipts from slot machines in the collection baskets. "The pope says priests should be where the people are, [and] there are 11 casinos in Laughlin, so this is where we have taken our services," says Father Charlie Urnick of the nearby St. John the Baptist Catholic Church.

NEW THIS MONTH: VACATION TRAVEL TIPS

- **Hilton Hotels has made its debut in St. Kitts and Nevis** with the 102-room **Koi Resort Saint Kitts**, Curio Collection by Hilton. It is a joint venture with Koi Hospitality, a first-time entry in the hotel industry. Call your Burkhalter leisure travel advisor for details.
- **Smart Traveler (iOS, Android – Free)** is an official U.S. Department of State app for U.S. citizens and nationals who travel internationally. The app provides access to the State Department's country information, including U.S. embassies and consulates, entry, exit and visa requirements, safety and security information, health, local laws and travel advisories.
- **These links could come in handy: Lyft Fare Estimators: <https://estimatefares.com/>; Uber Fare Estimators: <https://www.uber.com/us/en/price-estimate/>; Airport Terminal Maps [Terminal Maps](#)**

BURKHALTER TRAVEL SPECIALS

*Well, here we are in the heart of winter with regular threats of major snowfalls (some arrive, some don't) balanced by temperatures that are almost (but not quite) Spring-like. If you're feeling let down after the holiday frenzy, and already tired of winter, there's an easy cure for that: Think about travel! Check out options! **Plan a trip!** No surprise, we have several suggestions.....*

Go Where It's Warm..... - **Book now!**

...to the **Cheeca Lodge & Spa** in Islamorada, FL! With a private white-sand beach on stunning turquoise waters, luxury accommodations and first-class dining, Cheeca Lodge & Spa is paradise in the Florida Keys and a perfect antidote for the winter blahs. Located only 90 minutes south of Miami International Airport along US Route 1, the recently renovated 27-acre tropical playground with 214 beautifully appointed accommodations, three onsite restaurants and so much more, is an exceptional getaway for both couples and families. Complimentary buffet breakfast daily for two, upgrade based on availability, and lots more! All this is available on select dates from now to October. [Contact us](#) today for details about this Escape Winter Experience! Look for more information [here](#) and then click [here](#) to call or email any of our offices!

Princess Cruises Best. Sale. Ever! - **Offer expires soon!**

There's never been a better time to book a cruise than during the **Princess Cruises Best. Sale. Ever.** Not only is this an offer they've never made before....it's also a \$95 per day value! Do the math: a 7-day cruise = \$665 of added value! Why is this Princess's best sale ever? Because it includes No hidden fees, Premier Beverage Package with tips, Unlimited Wi-Fi, Full gratuities paid on your behalf, ALL destinations, ALL cruises 3 days and longer, ALL stateroom categories. **Sale ends February 29, 2020** on select cruises sailing starting April, 2020. Don't wait to book! Get your quote today to secure the best availability. (Note: ONLY available if all guests in a stateroom elect to participate in the Offer.) [Contact us](#) today for details. Look for more information [here](#) and then click [here](#) to call or email any of our offices!

Experience CIE Tours - **Book now to the end of January!**

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Fitchburg

3050 Cahill Main
608-441-0151/888-522-4269

Stoughton

Chalet Travel, 226 S. Forrest
608-873-8133/800-733-6970

Madison East

615A North Sherman Avenue
608-241-7500/800-414-7166

Prairie du Sac

180 Washington Street
608-643-4599/800-242-8457

Brookfield

Olson Travel, 200 S. Executive Dr.
Suite 101
262-782-0110/800-847-5921

Oregon

763 N. Main Street
608-835-8474/800-537-0419

Baraboo

141 Third Avenue
608-356-4999/800-660-8359

Dubuque IA

Travel Headquarters, 2095 JFK Rd
563-588-3456/800-383-0563

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