



Topic: Low-cost tourism. Economic opportunity or environmental risk?

Low-cost air travels, operated by airlines specialized in the field, provide a significant benefit in terms of economic savings, thus allowing even the less well-off tourists the chance of taking advantage of a typically expensive service – such as air travel. Whilst low-cost travel has its own advantages, on the other hand the long-standing argument about the amount of pollution, emitted by the planes we board on, persists.

Argument PRO: "Low-cost travels represent an economic opportunity".

Argument AGAINST: "Low-cost travels constitute a major environmental risk".

Current situation, scenario, and context.

Over the last few years, especially thanks to the Internet, the number of people looking for low-cost flights and/or travel has increased exponentially and at the same time, the number of sites offering these advantageous offers has increased. Low-cost travelers enjoy the tangible advantage of reducing their ticket costs, as well as the possibility to compare, evaluate, and choose the countless offers directly from home.

According to the first Airports Council International (ACI) World Air Traffic Report 2019, in 2018 the worldwide passenger traffic grew by 6% compared to the previous year, totaling 8.8 billion people. Yet, this ever-accelerated mobility will by no means be good for the planet, unless companies work on reducing the levels of emissions per passenger and per unit of space travelled. According to data released by the Air Transport Action Group, the sector today produces only about 2% of overall CO₂ emissions from human activity.

In Europe, some proposals have already been made: some French representatives have suggested to abolish all the flights of the air routes covered by fast trains and which do not imply a time saving of more than two and a half hours. Belgium has proposed to tax air tickets to discourage their use; at European level, debates have been going on for some time now to reform the taxation on aircraft fuel.

Many are opposed to any form of "low-cost travel"; on the other hand, others stress the importance they have in facilitating our lifestyle and reaping the benefits in travel, economy and trade.

Arguments pro:

- The development of low-cost travel has brought countless advantages: the development of "welcoming" territories; trips spread throughout the week and not only on weekends, and this is intended for any income bracket of customers thanks, for instance, to the reduced prices of air fares.
- The environmental sustainability of aviation continues to improve. By 2040, further improvements are expected in terms of the average fuel consumption vis-à-vis passenger and kilometer flown.

Arguments against:

- Low-cost travel necessarily presupposes the lowering of workers' salaries, implemented both directly (with wage moderation) and indirectly (with the restriction of contractual rights), and dynamics of "overtourism" i.e. overcrowding from an excess of tourists compared to the capacity of the destinations.
- In aviation, there is no talk of non-fossil fuels or technological innovations such as electric planes. The real improvements concerning the environmental impact of airplanes have mainly concerned fuel savings, nothing else.

Further Insights:

- Our world data: <https://ourworldindata.org/breakdown-co2-aviation>
- Our world data: <https://ourworldindata.org/co2-emissions-from-aviation>
- European Parliament: [Emissions from planes and ships: facts and figures \(infographic\)](#)