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## Airfare deals still available for late-summer travel

Airfares are up as much as \$10 round-trip on many domestic routes after several U.S. legacy and low-cost carriers last week matched a recent price hike by [United Airlines](#).

Experts say the move is a last-minute bid to boost revenue before travel demand wanes as children head back to school.

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"Airlines are definitely trying to end summer with a bit of a bang," [Travelzoo](#) Senior Editor Gabe Saglie said of recent increases.

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Still, the late-summer travel outlook isn't all bad.

"We are still seeing some good price points for last-minute travelers," said [Bill Miller](#), senior executive of CheapOair. "Travelers just need to be ready to grab a deal when they see it."

For example, the average round-trip airfare from [Fort Lauderdale](#) to Atlanta is \$223 this summer, down from \$242 and \$251 in 2011 and 2010, CheapOair data showed.

Others say airfares aren't going up again, at least not for now.

"Given the slower fall season starting at the end of August, it is unlikely we will see another hike in the next few months," said Rick Seaney, CEO of FareCompare.com.

Seaney said the recent hike, however, does show airlines are confident about keeping their planes full from July through September.

The good news for South Floridians is that airfares to several destinations, particularly from [Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport](#), remain lower than last summer.

The average round-trip airfare from Fort Lauderdale to New York was \$186, compared with \$223 last year, based on searches in July on Fly.com, an airfare search engine.

For travel from Fort Lauderdale to Washington, D.C., the average airfare was \$178, down 11 percent from last year's average price of \$201, Fly.com data showed. Flights to Atlanta, Los Angeles and Las Vegas were also trending lower this summer.

Average airfares from Miami to New York and to Washington, however, were higher than last summer, at \$310 and \$268 round-trip.

Travelers departing South Florida airports that offer more low-cost carriers have greater odds of finding more affordable fares and availability, Saglie said. "Very often it's these low-cost carriers that will drive pricing."

Spirit, [JetBlue](#) and Southwest are among low-cost airlines operating flights from Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach airports.

Still, experts warn travelers who haven't bought tickets yet that time is running out to snag decent fares, especially if traveling before Aug. 20 — the official end of summer for airlines this year. After that, prospects tend to be better as fares typically drop.

"Discounts and sale fares [overall] have been much harder to come by this summer," said Jeff Klee, CEO of CheapAir.com. "When you book and when you fly are bigger factors now."

Klee said travelers have a better chance of finding airfare deals if traveling midweek to midweek — for example, arriving and departing on a Tuesday or Wednesday.

If flying before Aug. 20, travelers should be persistent in checking prices, and book at least 14 days in advance or more of their travel date, Klee said.

Others say last-minute travelers searching for airfare deals should keep an open mind.

"Across the board, flexibility is the key," Saglie said.