

TRAVEL

DISPATCHES



JEREMY DWYER-LINDGREN, USA TODAY

Emirates flies a Boeing 777 for the 17 hour, 15 minute flight.

New world's longest flight

Emirates has bumped Qantas Airways out of the top spot for the world's longest flight. Emirates took over the title on Tuesday with the launch of its 8,819-mile non-stop route between Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, and Auckland, New Zealand.

That bumped Qantas' 8,576-mile route between Dallas/Fort Worth and Sydney — the previous record holder — into second place, according to flight-data provider OAG.

Singapore Airlines for years held the world's longest flight title for its Singapore-New York service. The airline scrapped the route in 2013 but says it will resume the 9,537-mile flights in 2018.

WORLD'S LONGEST COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS

1 Auckland, New Zealand to Dubai, UAE (8,819 miles): Emirates (Boeing 777). 17 hours, 15 minutes (scheduled) on Dubai-bound flight.

2 Dallas/Fort Worth to Sydney (8,576 miles): Qantas (Airbus A380). 16 hours, 55 minutes on Sydney-bound flight.

3 Atlanta to Johannesburg (8,434 miles): Delta Air Lines (Boeing 777). 16 hours, 57 minutes on Atlanta-bound flight.

4 Los Angeles to Abu Dhabi, UAE (8,375 miles): Etihad (Boeing 777). 16 hours, 40 minutes on Los Angeles-bound flight.

5 Los Angeles to Dubai, UAE (8,323 miles): Emirates (Airbus A380). 16 hours, 20 minutes on Los Angeles-bound flight.

Ben Mutzabaugh



THINKSTOCK

German passport holders have the most freedom to travel.

Passports with power

When German citizens say *auf Wiedersehen* to Germany, they can use their passports for visa-free travel to 177 other countries and territories, making it the most powerful passport in the world. Henley & Partners, a London-based residence and citizenship planning firm, has published its annual Visa Restrictions Index and, for the third straight year, Germany is on top.

Sweden is in second place, with visa-free travel to 176 out of a possible 218 countries. Finland, France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom are tied for third with access to 175 countries. The United States is in fourth place, tied with Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands, with access to 174 countries.

Henley & Partners said the only changes to its Top 10 (which actually includes 28 different countries) was the appearance of Hungary (tied for 10th) and the loss of Malaysia, which slipped to 12th place.

"No country dropped more than three positions, indicating that overall, visa-free access is improving around the world," Henley & Partners said in a statement.

The bottom four countries were unchanged from last year: Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan are, according to the Index, "the worst passports in the world." Afghanistan has been ranked as the worst passport every year since 2010; an Afghan passport allows visa-free travel to only 25 countries.

Jelisa Castrodale

FLORIDA SHINES BRIGHT IN SPRING



GENE DUNCAN, WALT DISNEY WORLD

Florida tourism is red hot. In 2015, the Sunshine State welcomed more than 100 million visitors, a U.S. record. Many of them come in March and April — for spring break, baseball spring training or the chance to escape northern climes before winter's grip lets go. USA TODAY's Ashley Day, James Riley and Nancy Trejos look at what Florida-bound travelers will find this season.

THEME PARKS

There's an awakening of the Force at Disney Parks in Orlando this spring. First, on April 4, Disney's Hollywood Studios will introduce *Star Wars: A Galaxy Far, Far Away*, a new live stage show that features big moments from the seven movies. *Star Wars: A Galactic Spectacular*, a nightly fireworks and special effects spectacular at Disney's Hollywood Studios, will debut this summer. Scenes from the *Star Wars* movies will be projected onto the Studios' Chinese Theater as well as other nearby buildings.

However, just getting into a Disney park will cost a bit more, as the company has announced seasonal pricing for their one-day tickets. Value days (for less busy times of the year) are now \$105 for adults and \$99 for children from the ages 3-9 at the Magic Kingdom theme park. Regular days are now \$110 for adults and \$104 for children. Peak days (the most crowded times) are \$124 for adults and \$118 for children. Children under the age of 3 are free.

Universal Studios Orlando will begin transporting visitors to Skull Island this summer for the Reign of Kong attraction at Islands of Adventure, a 3D ride that promises to be one of Universal's longest ever.

Mako, soon to be Orlando's tallest, fastest and longest roller coaster, also will begin its feeding frenzy this summer at SeaWorld Orlando, with a top speed of 73 mph and a 200-foot-tall track.

HOTELS

Downtown Miami has in recent years experienced a building boom. That doesn't seem to be slowing down in 2016.

Later this month, the Langford Hotel is scheduled to open with 126 guest rooms in what once was the Miami National Bank in downtown's Flagler District. The remodeled 1925 structure is on the National Register of Historic Places.

In the thriving Brickell District, EAST, Miami will be perched on top of Brickell City Centre. Scheduled to open in May, EAST, Miami will have 352 rooms including eight suites and 89 residences. It will be the first U.S. property for Swire Hotels.



LANGFORD HOTEL

The Langford Hotel is scheduled to open later this month in what was once the Miami National Bank.

ME Miami, that brand's first U.S. location, will also open downtown this spring with 129 rooms. The property will have a sun deck on its 14th floor terrace, dual sunset and sunrise pools, cabanas and an STK steakhouse.

In Orlando, Universal Orlando Resort and Loews Hotels and Resorts will open the Loews Sapphire Falls Resort at Universal Orlando this summer. It will be the fifth on-site hotel at Universal Orlando Resort. The property will have 1,000 Caribbean-themed rooms and suites built around a lagoon and waterfall.

Over on the Gulf Coast, Kimpton Hotels and Restaurants is taking over management of the Hotel Zamora in St. Pete Beach. The Kimpton Hotel Zamora will be Kimpton's sixth hotel in Flori-

da, and its first flag on the west coast of the state. The hotel has 72 guestrooms, including 22 two-bedroom suites with balconies overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway and Gulf of Mexico.



BEACHCRAFT

Celebrity chefs abound in Miami. At Beachcraft, Tom Colicchio serves seafood and seasonal American fare

Some reliable grand dames of the Florida hospitality scene will

RESTAURANTS AND DINING

The Sunshine State is in the culinary spotlight with James Beard Foundation nods in Bal Harbour, Coral Gables, Orlando, Tampa and Miami, where Alter is a semi-finalist for Best New Restaurant and its chef, Bradley Kilgore, is up for Rising Star Chef of the Year.

Miami's food scene sizzles each February when South Beach Wine and Food Festival brings chefs and foodies from around the world, and many have come to stay. Celebrity chefs Jean-Georges Vongerichten (Matador Room, ABC Kitchen coming in 2017), Tom Colicchio (Beachcraft), Alex Guarnaschelli (Driftwood Room, Nautilus Cabana Club) and Spike Mendelsohn (Sunny's) opened restaurants in the last year or so.

In February, Matthew Kenney introduced plant-based and raw food destination Plant Food + Wine (along with a raw food culinary school on-site), restaurateurs Cindy Hutson and Delius Shirley opened restaurant and market concept Zest, and the "Million Dollar Chef" debuted Kaori by Walter Martino with \$300-\$700 tasting menus that fuse Italian and Japanese with indulgences like truffle and edible gold.

Central Florida visitors can look forward to new options at Orlando International Airport with a Cask & Larder outpost, Jersey Mike's Subs and Green Leaf's & Bananas in the newly renovated Terminal 2 (Southwest and Virgin America) Food Hall. Plus, Wahlburgers opened an Orlando outpost in February.

Spring travelers can experience Florida's famous Strawberry Festival in Plant City (now through March 13), the National Cuban Sandwich Festival in Tampa's Ybor City (March 30-April 3), the Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Parade & Festival (March 12-13) and the Marathon Seafood Festival (March 12-13). Craft beer fans will find new Florida brews at Bog Brewing and Ancient City Brewing in St. Augustine and Wicked Barley Brewing Co. in Jacksonville.