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Adding flights 'to the continent'

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As the peak European travel season approaches, major airlines are adding flights across the Atlantic.

Next month, Continental Airlines plans new flights from Newark, N.J., to Cologne, Germany, to Barcelona and to Copenhagen, bringing to 26 the total of European cities to which it flies from Newark. It is also adding flights on existing Newark routes, including to Edinburgh and Glasgow, Scotland, and to Manchester, England.

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With new service from Atlanta to Duesseldorf, Copenhagen, Athens and Edinburgh, among others, by summer, Delta will have more than 50 flights daily to 26 European cities. This summer, Lufthansa plans 227 flights a week from the United States to Germany, site of the World Cup, up from 214 last year.

Though British Airways flights are up only slightly from last year, it is using bigger planes on certain European routes. On its three daily flights from Boston to London, it is replacing Boeing 777s with 747s, hiking capacity 8 percent.

In all, the number of departures to Europe for June, July and August is rising about 7 percent to 35,223, according to Back Aviation Solutions, an industry-consulting firm, with Delta offering the most. The number of seats to Europe is up 5.7 percent.

Fares are higher than last year's. The average roundtrip economy fare from the United States to Europe booked in early April for summer travel was \$898, up from \$882, says Harrell Associates, an air-fare analysis firm.

Heading to France

The abolition of a much-disputed youth labor measure in France recently largely brought an end to two months of protests and strikes that threatened to hurt tourism.

During the upheaval, some Americans crossed France off their vacation list this year. Susan Tanzman, of Martin's Travel & Tours in Los Angeles, said at least 15 of her clients changed plans, many choosing Italy or Spain instead.

Other travel companies said the protests had little to no impact on bookings to France. Alexandre Chemla of Altour said: "When you decide to go to Europe, you have to get used to the fact that there may be a strike. It's part of the vacation."

Code-breaking travel

Banking on the success of "The Da Vinci Code" novel and anticipating even more interest when the movie is released, travel companies are putting together summer packages that trace the fictional trail of the novel and visit real-life landmarks featured in the book.

Globus (globusjourneys.com) is offering a 15-day Secrets of Da Vinci tour in August and September that starts at \$2,899. It visits Milan to see Leonardo's "Last Supper," discussed at length in the novel, and the Louvre Museum in Paris, where the story begins.