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Airline Travel Numbers Inch Closer to 2019

AIRLINES & AIRPORTS | RICH THOMASELLI | MAY 24, 2021



Security lines at the airport. (photo by Eric Bowman)

It's no longer valid to compare current daily airline travel numbers to what happened on the exact date a year ago, when the COVID-19 pandemic was at its most merciless.

No, now that new metric is set against 2019 numbers, the last full year of normal customer traffic.

And numbers don't lie.

The Transportation Security Administration reported processing 1,863,597 passengers through its checkpoints across the country on Sunday, May 23. It was the greatest number of fliers in the pandemic era.

More importantly, the numbers were right in line with the same day in

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from March of 2020 to the present.

What's even more encouraging is that it wasn't a holiday, when travel numbers tend to swell [as they did two weeks ago for Mother's Day](#).

But the biggest and most extended holiday is upon us - summer.

Starting with the Memorial Day weekend upcoming, the TSA is [preparing for a significant rise in passenger traffic numbers](#) as the typically busy summer travel period approaches.

In fact, the agency is looking to [hire more officers](#) and has implemented new technology to improve the screening process.

"Like all of us, TSA faced tremendous challenges over the past year with the ongoing global pandemic," TSA Administrator Darby LaJoye recently told Congress. "Air travel came to a near-standstill, and operational agility and the resilience of our workforce and the strength of our partnerships was tested like never before."

While the number of passengers being screened has grown, the TSA took advantage of the lower travel numbers by installing more than 1,000 credential authentication machines at 121 locations and about 300 devices designed to eliminate the need for travelers to remove electronics, liquids and other items from bags.

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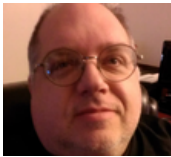
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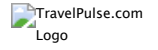
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