RYANAIR REDUCES SERVICE AT SPANISH REGIONAL AIRPORTS

Ryanair, an Irish low-cost airline, has announced that it will reduce its offer in Spain by 18% in the summer of 2025. The decision affects 800,000 passenger seats and 12 routes at seven Spanish regional airports.

Ryanair's cuts primarily impact smaller, less frequented airports. Flight operations at Jerez (XRY) and Valladolid (VLL) airports will be suspended entirely. Additionally, an aircraft based in Santiago will be decommissioned, and **flight schedules at five other airports—Vigo (VGO), Santiago (SCQ), Zaragoza (ZAZ), Asturias (OVD), and Santander (SDR)—will be significantly reduced.**

These airports, which serve as crucial regional transport hubs, will consequently lose passenger volume and economic significance. This is particularly concerning for smaller cities and rural areas, as the cancellation of routes can negatively affect connectivity and tourism in Spain.

Criticism of Aena and the Fee Structures

Ryanair attributes its decision to cut flights to the actions of Aena, the major Spanish airport operator. Aena, which oversees 48 Spanish regional airports, is accused by Ryanair of failing to provide enough incentives for airlines to utilize the unused capacity at the airports. Instead, Ryanair claims that Aena prefers to invest in airports outside of Spain, such as those in the Caribbean and North and South America.

Eddie Wilson, CEO of Ryanair, was particularly critical of Aena's fee policy. Although Spain's National Commission for Markets and Competition (CNMC) has frozen passenger charges for 2025 at the 2024 level of €10.35 per passenger, Ryanair believes this measure is insufficient to counteract the impact of fare increases in 2024 and the lack of incentives. Wilson has called for a five-year freeze on fees and targeted incentive packages to encourage airlines to redirect their capacity to Spanish regional airports.

Relocation to Other Markets

Due to insufficient support in Spain, Ryanair intends to shift its aircraft and capacity to other European markets, including Italy, Sweden, Croatia, and Hungary, where governments actively encourage air travel. Additionally, Morocco seems to benefit from this development. This situation highlights the aviation industry's increasing support for national funding programs and favorable country conditions.

Broader Economic Impact

Ryanair's service reduction could have significant consequences for Spain. Beyond the direct financial losses for the affected airports, jobs are also at risk, both within the airline and in the tourism and service industries. Regional airports often play a vital role in local economies, and their influence extends beyond passenger traffic.

The criticism of Aena raises important questions about the operator's long-term strategy. While **focusing on larger, more profitable airports may seem economically sensible, it could potentially harm regional development and heighten competition among European airports in the long term.**

The conflict between Ryanair and Aena underscores the tensions between airlines and airport operators in Europe. Airlines are increasingly relying on incentive programs and low fees to stay competitive, while airport operators face the challenge of financing and operating their infrastructure in an economically viable manner.

It remains uncertain whether Ryanair's demands for a comprehensive incentive system and frozen fees will be addressed. However, competition for passengers and investments among European airports will continue to intensify. Countries that actively create incentives may benefit in the long run, while less adaptable locations could suffer.

Date: 2025-01-27

Article link:
https://www.tourism-review.com/spanish-regional-airports-to-lose-important-traffic-news14765