

BLACKLANE

UPGRADE YOUR TRAVELS

Plan ahead: Here's when travelers get to the airport

U.S. and EMEA traveler behavior:
April 2019 - October 2021

November 2021



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How early SHOULD you get to the airport before your flight?

Airlines and airports guide flyers to allot ample time to limit stress and ensure a smooth preflight experience. The current rule of thumb, post-COVID, is for U.S. travelers is to arrive at least two hours before domestic departures and three hours before international departures.¹

European recommendations tend to follow this approach. Some airports, like Charles de Gaulle in Paris, suggest 1.5 hours before domestic and medium-haul European flights and two to three hours for international long-haul flights.² On the other hand, Munich Airport suggests that travelers add 50% to the time recommended by the airline to give a "sufficient buffer" and avoid pre-flight stress.³

U.S. and EMEA recommended airport arrival time

Domestic flights	120 Min
International flights	180 Min

¹ [The Points Guy](#), "Travel is back, and so are the crowds. How early do you need to get to the airport?" July 20, 2021

² [ParisAeroport.fr](#), "Welcome to Paris Charles de Gaulle airport (CDG)." Accessed on October 26, 2021.

³ [Munich-Airport.com](#), "Easy Travel." Accessed on October 26, 2021.



New data: How early travelers DO get to the airport?

Until now, little data existed on how early travelers chose to actually arrive before scheduled departures.

Blacklane, the global chauffeur service, is the first to reveal how much time hundreds of thousands of travelers truly allow before their flights are supposed to leave. The times for the first ten months of 2021 show the new normal of post-pandemic traveler behavior.

Blacklane's research shows the collective approach of hundreds of thousands of travelers. These findings give flyers fresh insight on what to expect in the U.S. and across Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA).

U.S. actual airport arrival time January - October 2021

Domestic flights	105 Min
International flights	154 Min

EMEA actual airport arrival time January - October 2021

Domestic flights	87 Min
International flights	142 Min



Methodology

Blacklane looked at its rides from April 2019 to October 2021 that ended at airports and included guests' departing flight numbers. The research calculates the median difference between:

1. Flights' scheduled departure times; and
2. When guests arrived at airports and ended their rides, indicated by chauffeurs' actions on Blacklane's chauffeur app.

Findings cover airports Blacklane serves across the U.S. and 34 EMEA countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the United Kingdom (U.K.).

Many European flights did not require passport checks or border controls before COVID-19 and Brexit. However, the combination of travel restrictions and Brexit brought new measures for many international travelers in Europe. Therefore, all European flights between two different countries are classified as "international" in this research. This includes flights within the Schengen Area, a 26-country zone that allows for free and unrestricted movement of people.

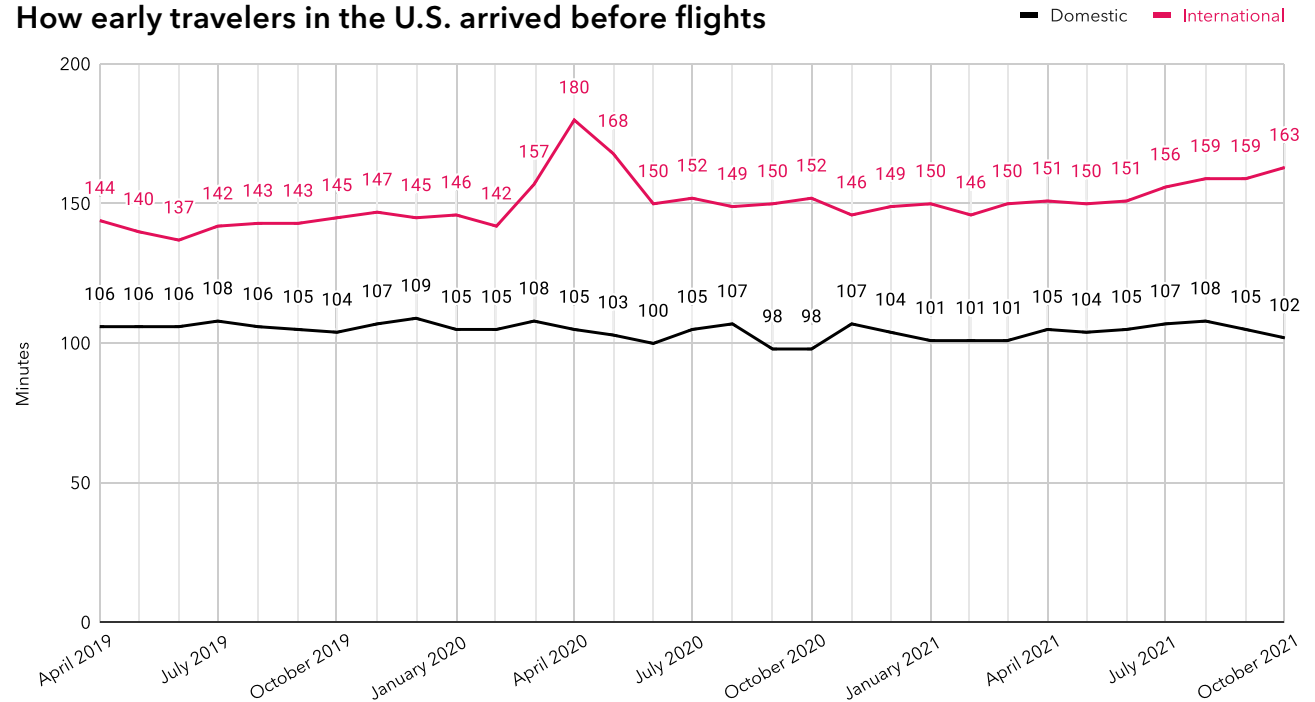
Monthly trends show the impacts of restrictions and the increase in international flights

Monthly data reveal two trends. First, flyers crossing international borders greatly increased their airport arrival time in the spring of 2020. While the number of flights plummeted, those who had essential trips allowed much more time to adjust to new airline and airport requirements.

Second, as more travelers resumed international flights – often for the first time post-pandemic – arrival times again increased. These trend lines indicate that travelers are likely to arrive even earlier for busy flying periods starting with 2021 holidays.

U.S. arrival time insights

How early travelers in the U.S. arrived before flights



The first wave of the pandemic brought the most drastic travel restrictions worldwide. From February to April 2019, U.S. travelers responded by arriving 38 minutes (27%) earlier for international flights.

In 2021, traveler arrival times increased along with the number of international flights. Many destinations require proof of vaccination or negative COVID tests, leading to more pre-flight document checks. From February to October 2021, travelers have gone from 146 minutes before departure to 163 minutes.

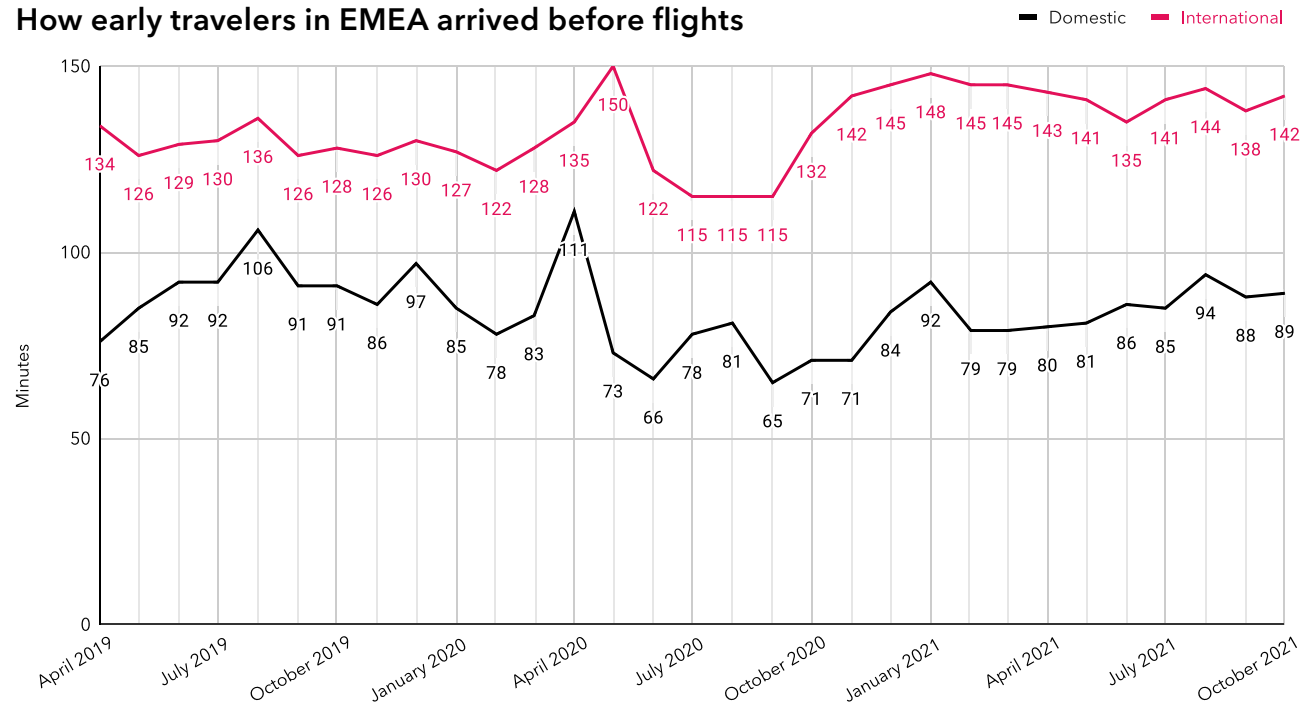
Meanwhile, whether pre- or post-pandemic, domestic travelers have arrived at a similar amount of time, between 98 and 109 minutes early.

**2021
Insight**

Expect Thanksgiving and Christmas travelers to arrive at least two hours before domestic flights and three hours before international flights. Therefore, Blacklane suggests planning for at least two and half hours for domestic trips and three and half hours before international trips.

EMEA arrival time insights

How early travelers in EMEA arrived before flights



In the first wave of the pandemic, from February to May 2020, EMEA international travelers arrived at the airport 28 minutes (23%) earlier. Similarly, domestic flights even saw a spike, going from 78 minutes in February to 111 minutes (42% higher) in April.

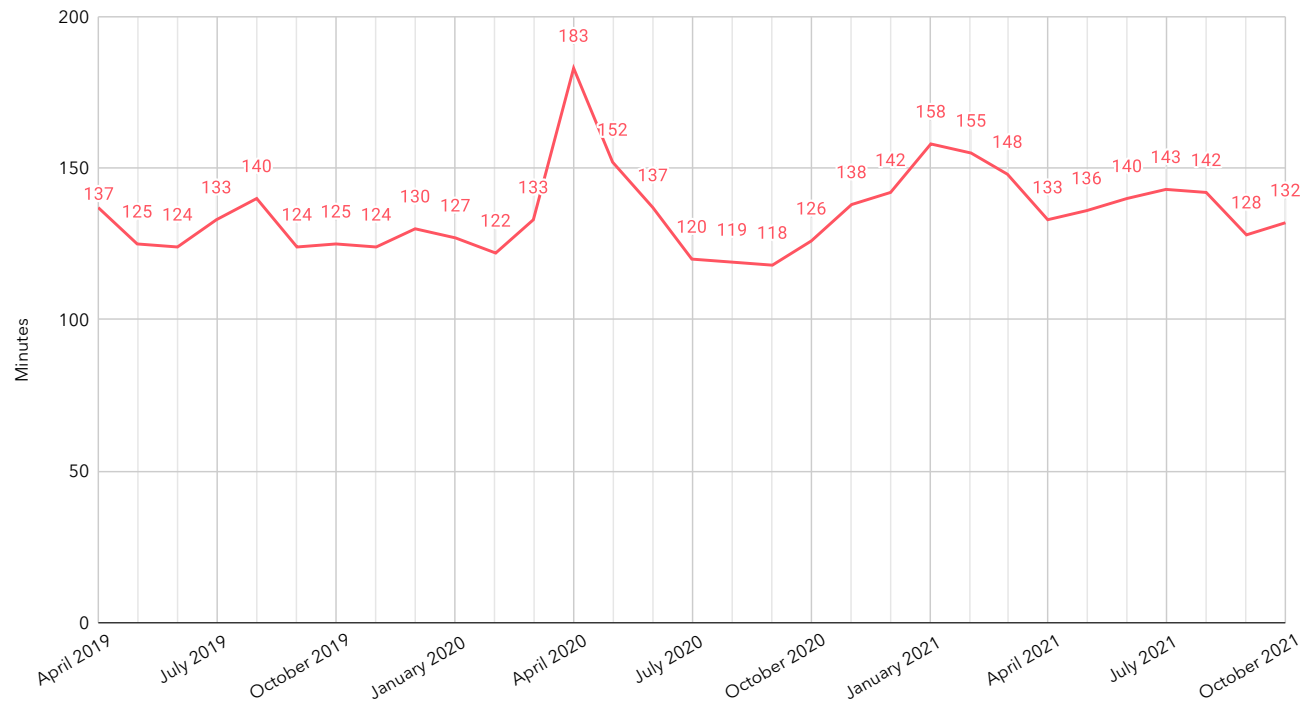
In the fall of 2020, a new wave of the pandemic brought new testing requirements and document checks to cross borders. EMEA saw a new spike in arrival times then, which has held steady since. From July to September 2020, EMEA travelers flying internationally arrived 115 minutes before flights. The time increased from 132 minutes in October 2020 to 148 minutes (12%) in January 2021.

**2021
Insight**

Assume that the new normal of international arrival times – including for Schengen Area flights – is here to stay. COVID-19 restrictions and the recovery of the airline industry means that any international flight, no matter how short, entails new pre-flight boarding processes.

Country breakdowns:
United Kingdom

How early travelers in the U.K. arrived before international flights



U.K. international travelers arrived more than an hour earlier for international flights when comparing February 2020 to April 2020. The country's second peak followed EMEA's from September 2020 to January 2021, but then arrival times decreased.

**U.K. actual airport arrival time
January - October 2021**

International flights

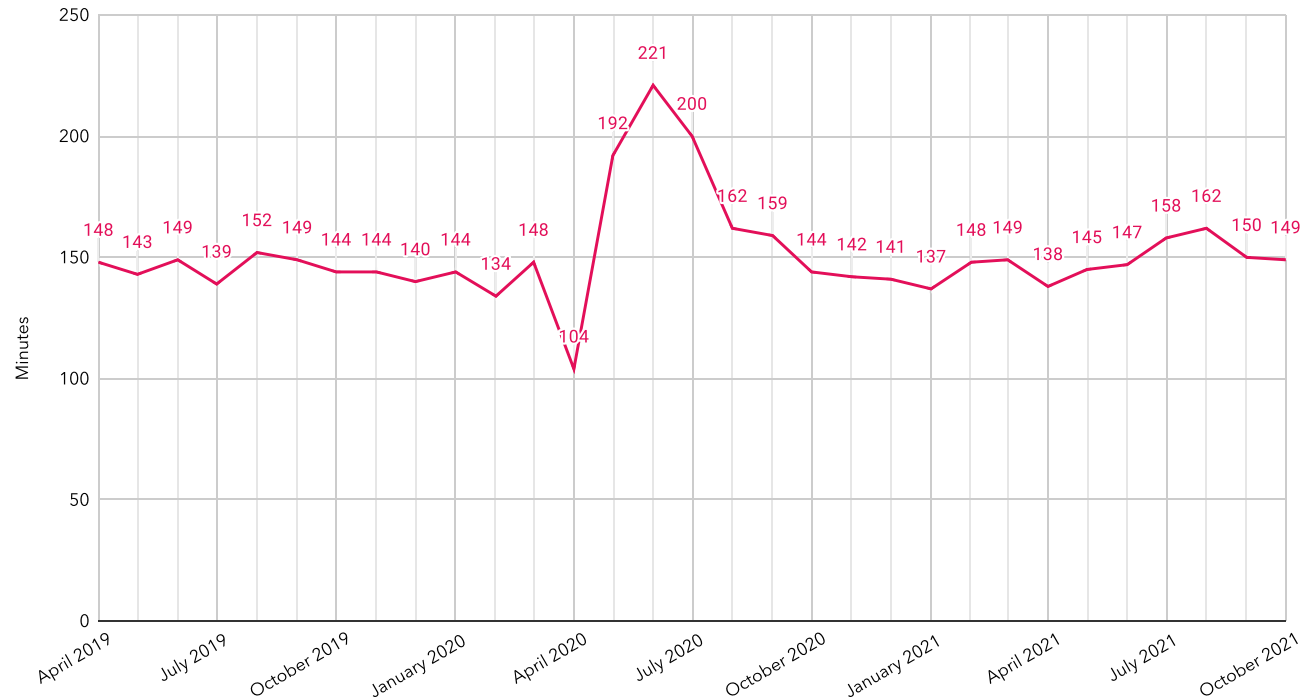
136 Min

2021
Insight

December travel will likely resemble the first three months of 2021, when travelers arrived two and half hours before international departures. Blacklane recommends arriving at least three hours before international trips to account for Christmas trips plus the boost in travel from the resumption of U.S. international arrivals.

Country breakdowns:
United Arab Emirates

How early travelers in UAE arrived before international flights



UAE international flyers arrived more than three hours early at the peak of the first wave. Their arrival times remained high through September 2020. Since then, arrival times have generally returned to pre-pandemic levels.

UAE actual airport arrival time
January - October 2021

International flights

148 Min

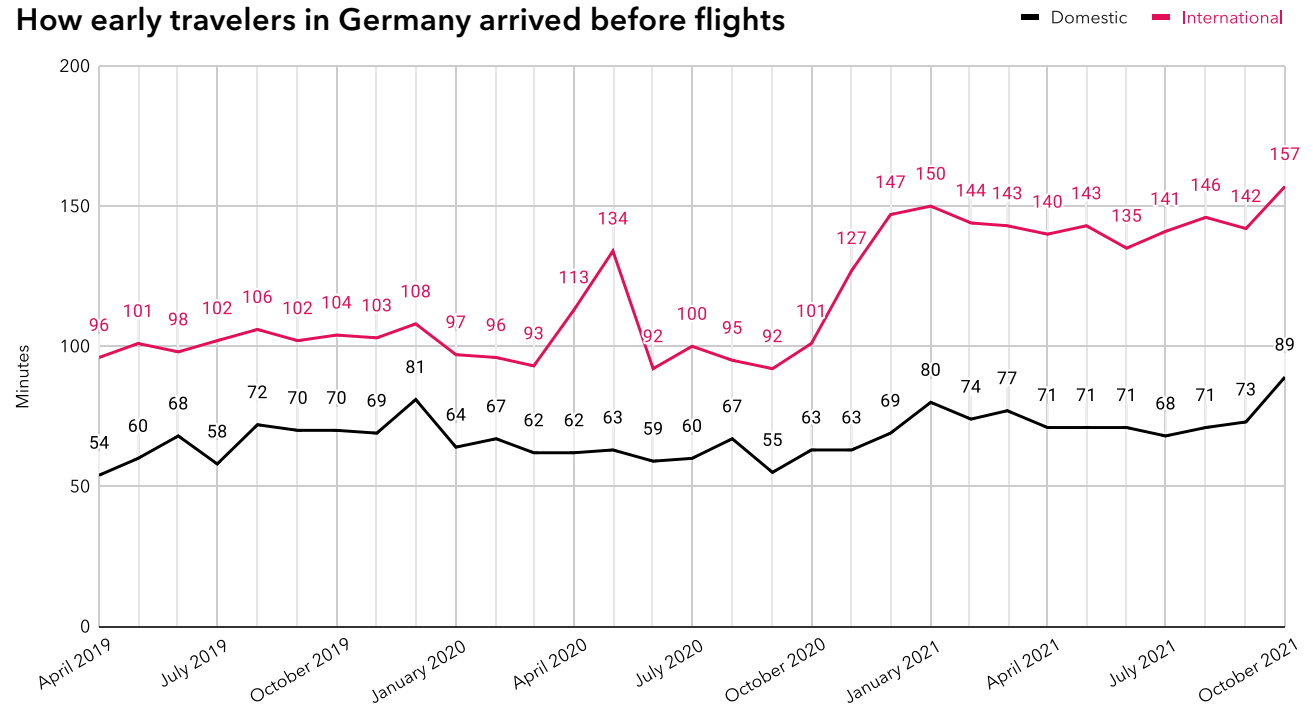
The dip to 104 minutes in April 2020 was due to a low number of Blacklane rides to the airport when travel restrictions first hit. This monthly number does not necessarily represent broader traveler behavior.

2021
Insight

The country's high rate of vaccinations and dominance of two major airports brought stability to flyers' behaviors. Arriving three hours early before peak holiday travel days is best, and both Abu Dhabi and Dubai airports are well equipped for busy travel days.

Country breakdowns: Germany

How early travelers in Germany arrived before flights



Flyers taking international flights from Germany increased their arrival time during the first wave by 41 minutes. Similar to the EMEA trend, Germany also saw an increase last fall. International flyers arrived at the airport 92 minutes early in September 2020 and 150 minutes by January 2021, thanks in part to COVID-19 testing requirements and document checks. Unlike in EMEA and the U.K., however, arrival times are rising further in October 2021.

Germany actual airport arrival time January - October 2021

Domestic flights	72 Min
International flights	144 Min

**2021
Insight**

Prepare for all international flights, including those in the Schengen Area, to have similar lengthy check-in procedures. Especially busy international hubs, such as Frankfurt and Munich, could see a large increase in travel with the U.S. reopening. International holiday flyers should arrive at least three hours before departure.

U.S. airport comparison: 2021 arrival times

This map shows how early travelers at many U.S. airports have arrived before domestic and international flights in the first 10 months of 2021.

Airport	Airport Code	Median Arrival Minutes: Domestic	Median Arrival Minutes: International
Boston Logan International Airport	BOS	104	164
Charlotte Douglas International Airport	CLT	112	130
Chicago O'Hare International Airport	ORD	107	152
Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport	DFW	102	152
Denver International Airport	DEN	111	135
Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport	FLL	102	126
George Bush Intercontinental Airport	IAH	106	158
Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport	ATL	110	139
John F. Kennedy International Airport	JFK	109	146
Los Angeles International Airport	LAX	102	152
McCarran International Airport	LAS	114	147
Miami International Airport	MIA	107	155
Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport	MSP	112	130
Newark Liberty International Airport	EWR	107	155
Orlando International Airport	MCO	116	170
Philadelphia International Airport	PHL	109	150
San Francisco International Airport	SFO	101	155
Seattle-Tacoma International Airport	SEA	109	161
Washington Dulles International Airport	IAD	115	153

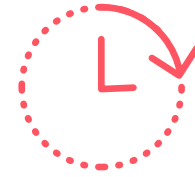


Most arrival time

Orlando domestic and international travelers arrive the earliest, at 116 and 170 minutes, respectively. This is due to a higher percentage of leisure travel than other markets, more often with families than at other airports.

Domestically, Washington Dulles and Las Vegas travelers arrive the earliest, at 115 and 114 minutes before departures respectively.

Boston flyers have the second highest buffer time before international flights, at 164 minutes.



Least arrival time

International flyers from Fort Lauderdale arrive the closest to their flights, 126 minutes in advance.

Domestically, travelers leaving San Francisco arrive 101 minutes before scheduled departures. Dallas-Ft. Worth, Fort Lauderdale and Los Angeles follow at 102 minutes.



EMEA airport comparison: 2021 arrival times

This table shows how early travelers at popular EMEA airports have arrived before international flights in the first 10 months of 2021.

Airport	Airport Code	Country	Median Arrival Minutes: International
Abu Dhabi International Airport	AUH	UAE	140
Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas Airport	MAD	Spain	133
Amsterdam Airport Schiphol	AMS	Netherlands	122
Barcelona International Airport	BCN	Spain	125
Ben Gurion International Airport	TLV	Israel	131
Berlin Brandenburg Airport	BER	Germany	103
Brussels Airport	BRU	Belgium	142
Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport	BUD	Hungary	118
Cape Town International Airport	CPT	South Africa	171
Charles de Gaulle	CDG	France	143
Copenhagen Kastrup Airport	CPH	Denmark	113
Domodedovo International Airport	DME	Russia	144
Dubai International Airport	DXB	UAE	149
Dublin Airport	DUB	Ireland	128
Düsseldorf International Airport	DUS	Germany	150
Eleftherios Venizelos Athens International Airport	ATH	Greece	128



Airport	Airport Code	Country	Median Arrival Minutes: International
Frankfurt am Main Airport	FRA	Germany	155
Glasgow International Airport	GLA	U.K.	135
Hamad International Airport	DOH	Qatar	162
Hamburg Airport	HAM	Germany	148
Helsinki Vantaa Airport	HEL	Finland	115
Istanbul Airport	IST	Turkey	152
King Fahd International Airport	DMM	Saudi Arabia	161
King Khaled International Airport	RUH	Saudi Arabia	153
Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport	FCO	Italy	149
Lisbon Airport, Humberto Delgado	LIS	Portugal	154
London City Airport	LCY	U.K.	97
London Gatwick Airport	LGW	U.K.	131
London Heathrow Airport	LHR	U.K.	138
London Luton Airport	LTN	U.K.	124
London Stansted Airport	STN	U.K.	129
Luxembourg Airport	LUX	Luxembourg	100



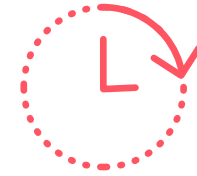
Airport	Airport Code	Country	Median Arrival Minutes: International
Malpensa Airport	MLX	Italy	145
Manchester Airport	MAN	U.K.	139
Munich Airport	MUC	Germany	147
Nice Côte d'Azur Airport	NCE	France	138
O.R. Tambo International Airport	JNB	South Africa	160
Orly Airport	ORY	France	117
Oslo Airport, Gardermoen	OSL	Norway	142
Palma de Mallorca Airport	PMI	Spain	117
Pulkovo Airport	IPK	Russia	147
Queen Alia International Airport	AMM	Jordan	126
Sheremetyevo International Airport	SVO	Russia	132
Stockholm Arlanda Airport	ARN	Sweden	138
Václav Havel Airport Prague	PRG	Czechia	123
Vienna International Airport	VIE	Austria	136
Warsaw Chopin Airport	WAW	Poland	117
Zurich Airport	ZRH	Switzerland	149



Most arrival time

Cape Town travelers arrive the earliest. At 171 minutes, they arrive 29 minutes earlier than EMEA-wide travelers do before international departures.

Flyers from Doha allow the second-most time to arrive, at 162 minutes.



Least arrival time

London City flyers arrive only 97 minutes before their international flights. The other London airports range from 124 minutes (Stansted) to 138 minutes (Heathrow).

Second is Luxembourg, at 100 minutes.



German comparison

Berlin travelers arrive with far less time (103 minutes) than travelers from other major German cities do. In Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Munich, and Stuttgart flyers get to the airport between 134 and 155 minutes early.



About Blacklane

Blacklane's global chauffeur service brings peace of mind to travellers arriving at airports, leaving them, or riding anywhere in the 50+ countries it serves worldwide. The crew's dedication to safety, reliability, and smart technology places Blacklane at the forefront of a new era of stress-free travel. Since 2017, the company has been carbon-neutral, combining a five-star guest experience with care for the planet. Upgrade your travels on Blacklane's [mobile apps](#) or [website](#).

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