

FLIGHT CHANGES: Be transparent, or lose out

QUESTION :

NST

NOV 25, 2009

AIRLINES offering special fares for business class on international flights should indicate restrictions and conditions on the electronic ticket.

I was booked and ticketed for Kuala Lumpur-Bangkok (KUL-BKK) MH784 on Nov 11 and MH785 BKK-KUL on Nov 15. The e-ticket indicated business class Category D for MH784 and Category E for MH785. The fare paid was RM2,282, inclusive of taxes.

On the e-ticket, it was stated that it was valid only on MH and that "penalty applies" without specifying details.

On Nov 10, I phoned Malaysia Airlines (MAS) reservations at 1-300-88-3000 and spoke to a staff (Wani) to change my return flight from Bangkok to MH785 on Nov 13 as I was scheduled to fly to Beijing on Nov 15.

I was told the flight was full. I requested to be put on the waiting list but was told I would have to pay RM557. I asked the staff what would happen if I did not get a seat on the flight, but there was no response. So I told the staff I was not willing to pay. In Bangkok, I went to the MAS ticket office at Ploenchit Tower on Nov 12 and made a request for the change. I was told that there was a seat in business class on MH785 but I had to pay RM480 (in the local currency) for me to board the flight.

Once again, I refused to pay. As one who works with the aviation industry in Asia, I could only conclude that MAS was willing to let the flight take off with an empty seat instead of giving it to a passenger who had paid a special fare (as offered by the airline) but refused to pay the additional RM480 when he wanted a change of flight. Does this make business sense? I stayed another two days in Bangkok and returned to KL as per the original schedule.

In July, MAS announced that passengers who paid full economy-class fare would be upgraded to business class and those who paid full business-class fare would be upgraded to first class.

Nothing was mentioned about the conditions tied to the upgrade or that those with Category E business class would be restricted to 25kg checked baggage, instead of 30kg.

MAS must realise that global airlines, including MAS, are reeling from the global financial turmoil and weakened demand for travel. Every occupied seat means revenue for the airline.

Conditions to special fares should not be hidden. It should be stated on the e-ticket that there would be a fee for changes to the flight and standbys are not allowed unless a fee is paid.

WILLIAM DENNIS, Subang Jaya

FEEDBACK :

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Electronic ticket restrictions

I REFER to the letter by Willam Dennis, "Be transparent, or lose out" (NST, Nov 25).

Dennis bought a business class ticket, Category E, for his flight from Bangkok to Kuala Lumpur, with the departure date scheduled for Nov 15. However, he wanted to return to Kuala Lumpur on Nov 13.

Upon checking with Ma-laysia Airlines' (MAS) staff, he was advised that seats for Category E were all taken up. Our staff informed him that he could still travel on Nov 13 on a higher-fare category and that he would need to pay the fare difference. If there had been seats available on the category E tickets, there would be no extra charge.

Dennis suggested that MAS should show all the ticket restrictions on the electronic ticket. This is not possible as the electronic ticket only allows for a maximum of 52 characters under "Restrictions".

The industry practice is to provide the remark "Penalty applies". This serves to inform the passenger that there are ticket restrictions.

DR AMIN KHAN Senior general manager Malaysia Airlines