

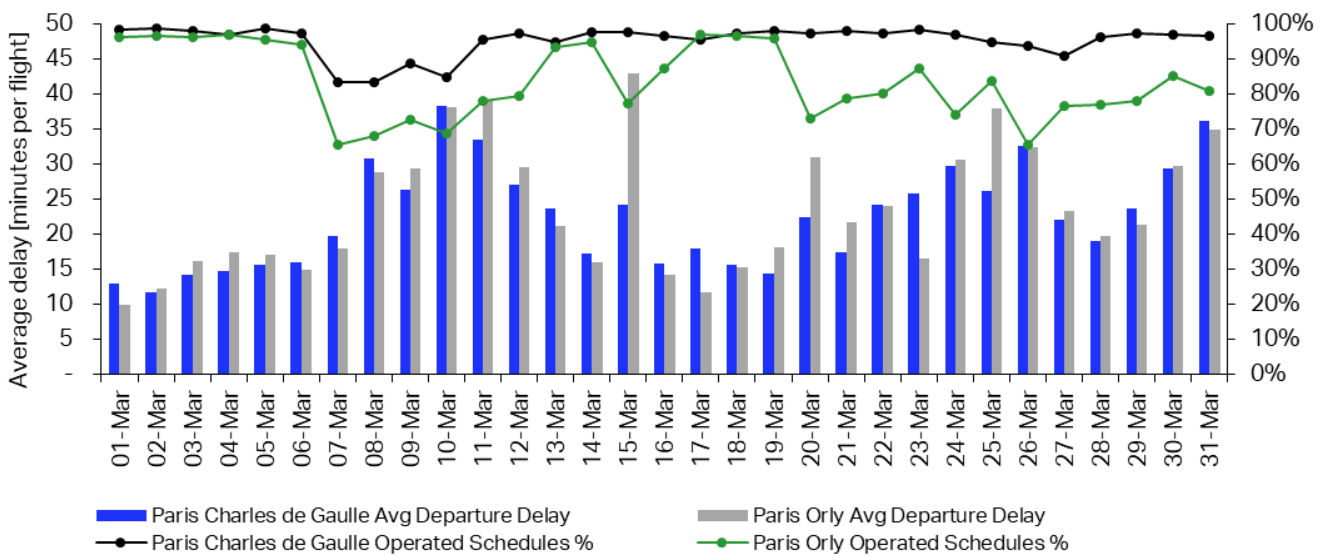


Chart of the Week

06 April 2023

Strikes in France create significant disruption to air travel

Paris Charles de Gaulle and Paris Orly Operated Schedules (%) and average departure delay (March 2023)



Data © European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation (EUROCONTROL)

- Passengers and air transport operators faced significant levels of disruption in March 2023, due to a wave of general strikes in France. The strikes were due to be held from 6-10 March but were extended, continuing throughout March and into April. For air travelers, the main impact was caused by reduced airspace capacity, which resulted in a sharp rise in flight cancellations and re-routings.
- The impact was experienced predominantly in France and Europe but the disruption also had a global knock-on effect. France is the world’s 8th largest air transport market and CDG in particular offers extensive global connectivity. Across a number of French airports, air carriers were requested to reduce their schedules markedly. Data for Paris airports shows that the cancellations peaked on 7 March, when only 83% of schedules were operated from CDG and 66% from ORY. Throughout the month approximately 4’500 flights were cancelled, affecting an estimated 730 thousand passengers.
- Over the month, only around 55% of operated flights departed on time (i.e. within 15 minutes of their scheduled departure). On 10 March, merely 1/3 of flights from CDG and ORY operated to schedule, with an average departure delay (commencing after 15 minutes) of more than 38 minutes per flight. The total delay across the two airports amounted to nearly 57 thousand minutes (around 950 hours) on 10 March alone, more than double the delay in the previous week. The peak in delay was observed on the last day of March, with a total of 61 thousand minutes of delay (over 1’000 hours) recorded.
- Assuming that most of the delay was accrued at the gate, EUROCONTROL estimates that the operational cost per minute of delay can be valued at EUR 147 for longer delays and EUR 40 for short delays (up to 30 minutes). This would imply that the cost of delay on 10 March falls in the range EUR 2.3 - 8.4 million and between EUR 2.4 - 9.0 million on 31 March.
- While significant in itself, this cost estimation does not come close to capturing the full economic impact of the missed business trips, leisure trips, and wider passenger value-of-time considerations. Beyond the direct impact from the Paris airports, dozens of aircraft per day were forced to circumnavigate the French airspace, needlessly extending flight durations, causing customer inconvenience, and increasing fuel burn.

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