

HK Express leads world's safest low-cost airlines for 2026

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Dhaka: HK Express has been named the world's safest low-cost airline for 2026, retaining the top position in AirlineRatings.com's annual safety rankings.

The list evaluates budget carriers using the same core safety metrics applied to full-service airlines, including incident rates per flight, fleet age, operational history and participation in global safety initiatives. This year's rankings also introduced stronger weighting for turbulence management and onboard safety audits.

Petersen said HK Express stood out for its modern fleet, exceptionally low incident rate and near-perfect performance during safety inspections. She also pointed to Hong Kong's strict incident-reporting requirements, which make the airline's record particularly notable.

Jetstar Airways and Scoot followed closely behind, with flydubai also appearing near the top — although AirlineRatings confirmed the airline will be assessed as a full-service carrier in future rankings due to changes in its operating model.

Several developments marked this year's low-cost list. Spring Airlines China became the first Chinese airline to appear in any AirlineRatings safety ranking, while Latvia's airBaltic made a significant jump into the top 10 following strong operational performance.

Other airlines featured in the 2026 Top 25 include easyJet, Southwest Airlines, Wizz Air, AirAsia, Ryanair, JetBlue, Norwegian, WestJet, GOL, and SKY Airline of Chile.

Petersen emphasized that all airlines on the list have experienced some form of incident in recent years — ranging from tail strikes to engine shutdowns — but stressed that such events are extremely rare when measured against total flight numbers.

Across the top 25 low-cost airlines, incident rates per flight ranged from just 0.002 to 0.09, underlining the overall safety of modern commercial aviation.

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