

SUPPLEMENT TO:

# JAXFAX<sup>®</sup> Travel Marketing MAGAZINE

MARCH 2009

*The Travel Agents' Path to Profits*

## The Air Consolidator Guide



**Editorial Features**

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• 2009 •  
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GUIDE & DIRECTORY**

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# What Is An Airline Ticket Consolidator?

**C**onsolidators are not airlines, they are independent entrepreneurs, like travel agents, intent upon offering you (on behalf of your clients) domestic and especially international airline tickets on name-brand, as well as secondary class, IATA airlines at rates well below the posted tariff rates.

The air ticket consolidator makes it possible for travel agents to obtain reserved seats for their clients, add a specific service charge or commission for you (the amount of the charge is not disclosed in the client's ticket) and still provide a round-trip airline ticket at lower cost than the client would pay by purchasing a regular ticket directly from the airline.

Most, but not all, air consolidators have contracts with at least one and usually a dozen or more IATA airlines. (Note: Charter flights are not involved in air consolidation.) Consolidators must use the ticketing and conditions of carriage rules of the specific airlines that they have contracts with. These are called prime consolidators.

Some air consolidators do not have contracts with any airlines. These consolidators—also legal—purchase airline tickets for resale to travel agents from prime consolidators.

All consolidators live by their reputation and are not specifically regulated by the U.S. or foreign governments or by IATA. Each airline makes its own decision whether or not to do business with any particular consolidator. It can be assumed that airlines set meaningful standards of performance and financial status when they appoint air consolidators. (The airlines want minimum negative exposure from consolidators.)

## **Why Should Travel Agents Use a Consolidator?**

Travel agents can utilize the expertise of air consolidators who compete openly against each other to provide quality air transportation on a wide range of airlines at prices highly competitive with tickets sold by the airlines or by "online" air ticket sellers—sellers who make little or no personal contact available to the travel agent.

Air ticket consolidators offer travel agents the choice of access to the consolidator's website or toll-free phone.

All consolidators sell tickets to travel agents in either net fare or commission categories. When purchasing a net fare, travel agents can add a service charge of their own selection. The amount of the charge is not identified in the passenger's ticket as such. If the ticket includes a commission for the agent, the amount of the commission also is not identified. Be sure that your service charge or commission (as appropriate) is always included when quoting the selling fare to your client!

By using air consolidators, travel agents have a conven-

ient, legal way to provide lower fare international (and domestic) airline tickets to their clients.

## **How To Choose a Reliable Consolidator**

Most travel agents have already chosen one or several air ticket consolidators who have earned the agent's confidence in recent or past transactions.

JAX FAX constantly monitors the general performance of the consolidators who list their flights and/or advertise in JAX FAX's monthly issues. Subscribing travel agents are encouraged to report poor performance and specific problems directly to JAX FAX. It is the ongoing goal of JAX FAX to maintain the highest level of credibility of its listers and advertisers.

When initially selecting or reviewing the choice of a consolidator, make sure that they meet your standards for business conduct.

## **You should choose your consolidator as you would choose any other professional:**

1. Ask your fellow travel agents who they patronize.
2. Make sure your potential (and actual) consolidator provides several optional carriers to the areas most in demand by your clients.
3. Test them on reliability and keeping their word.
4. Ask them how many airlines they have contracts with (a measure of how they rank with major airlines).
5. Do they provide you with written copy of the airline rules and restrictions of the carrier you booked? (They should.)

Ask members of your office staff if they have had personal business experience with prospective consolidators. Continue to be alert after you select a consolidator to make certain that they do not lapse into poor service. As with any other business relationship, vigilance is the key to serving your clients with the best products at prices that maintain your clients' loyalty.

## **What are the restrictions when booking a consolidator ticket?**

As noted previously, all consolidators must operate under the rules of the airline on which your client will fly. Since all airlines have their own rules/regulations, each and every ticket may carry unique conditions.

Airlines change rules all too frequently, so be alert and insist that your consolidator informs you in writing (preferably at the time of booking) so that you can advise your client regarding penalties for flight changes, frequent flyer miles, refunds, etc. Make sure that your client accepts the rules and regulations before you pay for the ticket.

***By using air consolidators, travel agents have a convenient, legal way to provide lower fare international (and domestic) airline tickets to their clients.***



## The Insider's Guide to Air Consolidators

By Linda Furry, CTC and Executive Vice President of Marketing for Centrav .  
Centrav is an airline consolidator based in Minneapolis, MN and is a member of USACA.

I began my adventure in travel as a retail agent almost 30 years ago. After many fulfilling years in the retail and corporate sectors, I joined the marketing team at Centrav, an international airline consolidator and have truly enjoyed being on the supplier side of travel. As you can see, I have been able to view this business from a couple of different perspectives. When I look back at all the changes that have taken place in this industry I am truly amazed. I would have to say that anyone that is still in travel after all these years must be a little crazy, but like many of you, I am still here and still smitten with this industry.

### Strictly Legit

The most dramatic changes in travel have been in international airline consolidation. I can remember when the first consolidators began working strictly in channel markets and they were very hush-hush. Today, it is estimated that airline consolidators generate \$3-\$5 billion in sales each year. Some have contracted with as many as 30 airlines offering net fares to almost every destination in the world.

### Worldwide Reach and Assurance

Perhaps the most significant development to affect the travel industry is the Internet or worldwide web, which has forever changed the way we do business. The Internet has brought a wealth of knowledge to our fingertips and has made it much easier to research destinations. But has this information superhighway really made the process of select-

ing a good airline consolidator any easier? In some ways, the superficial nature of websites has made the selection process even more perplexing... and time-consuming.

Today, anyone can put up an attractive website that tells us all the niceties we love to hear. ("We offer great fares, great service, etc.") But does that necessarily mean they are a legitimate supplier offering value to the retail agent? Hardly. Nor does it tell us what kind of customer service they will deliver under pressure. With all of the fares that the consumer can access online I would want to be sure I've found the best deal available. And with my reputation and my client's trip at stake, I also want to know that my consolidator will deliver excellent customer service in day-to-day and extraordinary circumstances. Here are key areas I would research in choosing an air consolidator:

### Don't Skip the Online Info

A Consolidator's website should have an airline guide that displays which airline partners they contract with and which regions of the world they service. You can also check the website for ease of use, speed, and pricing. Your colleagues in the industry may be able to recommend a consolidator that has demonstrated excellent customer service. And, it speaks highly of a consolidator if a consortium or host agency grants them Preferred Status. The financial information and customer service questions are more complex and quite a bit more difficult to answer. And at this point, you are probably thinking, "I don't have time to research consolidators for the next week." The truth is, with a couple of hundred consolidators to choose from, it would take longer than a week to research them one by one. Thankfully, there is good news and a shortcut.

### USACA Has Done the Research

Much of the research has already been done for you by the United States Air Consolidator Association (USACA). The USACA maintains stringent standards and its members must stay in compliance to keep their good standing. The 14 consolidators currently accepted into the USACA are some of the largest, most well-established air consolidators in the nation. All of them exceed requirements for financial stability, reputation, integrity, and contractual relationships with airline partners. Visit the USACA website for more information about the requirements and for a detailed profile of its member consolidators. There, you can also select a consolidator by region of service or airline. USACA lets you choose a consolidator that suits you best, knowing that the basic issues of legitimacy, product, and financial stability are already answered. There is no charge for using this service.

Visit [www.usaca.com](http://www.usaca.com)

## Investigating a Consolidator

- How long has this consolidator been in business?
- Are they financially solid with no bankruptcies?
- Take a look at their contracts, are they direct contracts with the airlines or are they just a reseller? *A reseller postures as a consolidator by purchasing from a true consolidator, adding a markup, and selling to the retail agent.*
- Does the consolidator have contracted fares to the destinations my clients want?

### Customer Service

- Does this consolidator have a supervisor or manager who is easily accessible?
- Is their staff easy to understand, service-oriented, and pleasant?

### Reputation

- Do they have Preferred Status with any consortiums or host agencies?
- Have any of my associates in the industry ever commented about this consolidator?

### Website

- Is the consolidator's website, easy to use, & accurate?
- Does it offer Booking Management tools to make the process easier for me?

### Pricing Use consolidators' websites for comparison.

- How do their fares stack up against the competition?
- Does their website's booking engine actually find availability at a price lower than other consolidators? That's the bottom line. *Some of these questions can be answered using the consolidator's own website.*

## Changing Times

By Prem Cohly President and CEO Hariworld Travels - New York



Internet, commissions, paper tickets, home based agencies, "see your travel agent" in airline advertising, these are but a few of the casualties we have encountered as we focus on the future. Still, despite seemingly impossible odds we have survived

and in some cases even thrived. Our survival can be attributed in no small way to the indomitable drive and entrepreneurial spirit of human nature. Our innate ability to adjust to the conditions that surround us never ceases to amaze.

Could anyone, in the halcyon days of commissions, overrides, fam trips and cooperative advertising have envisioned that our airline partners would abandon us and even compete against us with web only fares and partnering or owning their own internet companies? Who would have thought that the knight in shining armor, galloping to our rescue, would be a Consolidator? For many, using a Consolidator is a new experience. Who are they? Are they reliable? What products do they sell? How do I choose one?

### Who Are They?

Consolidators have been around for a long time and over the course of that time their role and reliability in the distribution process has evolved dramatically. Their introduction in the distribution system was initially labeled under the sinister and not too flattering titles of "The Grey Market" or "Bucket Shops." The airline product was highly perishable by nature, because once a plane lifted off an empty seat was a lost opportunity. Consequently they had to find some way to sell those seats at the last minute. Enter the consolidator with their customer base of students and ethnics who had one thing in common - they had their bags and were ready to travel. So productive was this channel of distribution that over the years the airlines relied more and more

on their contribution. Today instead of just making inventory available at the last minute the airlines have allocated special "Buckets" that can be sold as far in advance as published fares.

### Are They Reliable?

At the outset and even today, as in any other business venture, there were those with questionable credentials and business practices. How long have they been in business? Which Airlines do they deal with mostly? Have they had to post Letters of Credit and how much? Are they a member of the consolidator association USACA? What references can they provide? If what they are offering seems too good to be true it probably is.

### What Products Do They Sell?

Most consolidators you will find specialize primarily in international travel. Since these fares are more expensive there is more latitude for markup between the published and the net fares. This in turn allows you to make more profit. Some of the better consolidators offer upgrade programs from Coach to Business and Business to First class.

### How Do I Choose One?

One of the most obvious ways to verify the credentials of a specific consolidator is to check with JAX FAX. They have been dealing with them over the years and can offer a pretty good idea of the financial stability of most consolidators. Call your airline rep. Ask the Consolidator for agents they are doing business with that you might know.

This ever changing industry means embracing a whole new way of doing business. While it is different it is nevertheless the way the industry seems to be heading. Be prudent and do your homework and you won't go astray. Opportunities in the travel industry still abound and the public despite all the access they have to Websites etc. still find their way back to dealing with a person that they know and trust. Integrity, value and timely response are still the key elements of successful selling.



## International Air Consolidator Value Proposition

By Rosilyn Richey, Senior Vice President, C & H International

**A**ir Consolidators continue to be a significant and highly relevant distribution channel for airline suppliers. Whether we are in the

best of times or the worst, consolidators prove to be one of the most reliable groups in the travel industry. International air consolidators continue to provide travel professionals with services that make them both more productive and competitive. Travel agents that utilize air consolidators effectively are able to create a value proposition that supports the needs of their clients and the efforts of their work.

Today these transactions take place over the phone or through a secured, professional online environment. For satisfied customers, both the consolidator and travel professional must communicate effectively.

### The Future is Now

This year will prove to be another challenge for the indus-

try. Consolidators are balancing the pressures brought by the economic downturn and turning those into opportunities for their network of travel professionals in the form of highly competitive pricing. It is important for travel professionals to sell those offerings now so their clients can lock into the pricing while inventory is more abundant.

### Finding a Partner

Your success is our top priority at C&H International. If you don't make a profit selling travel, neither can we. It's that simple. Our mutual goal is to promote and sell travel as a lifelong investment, one that pays dividends year after year. C&H International is a member of the United States Air Consolidator Association, USACA. The management team adheres to the highest standards and has been in business for 27 years. We have a strong product offering to most international destinations. New and experienced travel professionals are welcome to register and book through our website at [www.cnhonline.com](http://www.cnhonline.com).

# Demystifying Consolidators

By Sal Prezioso, Director of Sales and Special Projects, Skybird



**W**e have come a long way since consolidators were considered a shadowy group of people that sold "cheap tickets," usually written on a particular airline's ticket stock, with their offices in a boiler room or a basement. Tickets often had to be paid for in cash, maybe a check but never a credit card. They were not highly regarded and their airline discounts and deals were often viewed with suspicion as to their legality. Many travel agents advised their clients against the purchase of tickets from these "bucket shops."

Today, Consolidators are one of the most reliable groups of travel companies in the travel industry. They have created an organization for maintaining standards and professional conduct, United States Air Consolidators Association (USACA), many of the members have been in business for 20 years or more and are multi million dollar companies. All airline tickets are issued either on universal airline ticket stock or through electronic ticketing (E Tickets). We are at the point now, where almost all major airlines are dealing exclusively with E-tickets. Virtually all airlines work with consolidators and a number of consolidators have made a significant investment in providing availability of fares through the four major reservations systems or on the World Wide Web to Travel Agencies. There are a couple of publications dedicated to providing agents with updated information regarding consolidators, but agents have already found one of the best ones if you are reading this.

## Who Are Consolidators?

At Sky Bird Travel, we try to provide the Travel Agency community with the best in the way of professional standards and responsiveness to needs.

For those travel agencies that are still not familiar with using an airline consolidator, there may sometimes be confusion or misconceptions regarding what an airline consolidator does. To help clarify the matter, an airline consolidator is a company that has various volume based airfare agreements with one or more airlines. Due to consolidators' productivity and relationships with their carriers, they are able offer to travel agents an opportunity to provide a discount to their clients, while at the same time, freeing agents from the task of issuing international tickets that pay little or no commissions at all.

## Making Money With Consolidators

One of the most important reasons to utilize consolidator tickets is that agents can control the amount of money they are able to charge on a ticket. Sky Bird provides agents with net airfares allowing you to determine your own commission by adding a markup of your own choosing. You decide how competitive you wish that fare to be; you know your market and what it can bear.

Regarding published fares, there can often be a published discount sale fare that is as low as or lower than some of our consolidator rates. Consolidators can often issue those tickets on your behalf, but the advantage that agents have is that they can still receive a commission level with no caps as compared to no commission you would have earned if you had issued the ticket yourself and booked it directly with a carrier.

For certain First Class or Business Class airfares we also

have either a significant discount we can offer or a commission plan as well. At the end of the day, you have the opportunity to earn more than you normally would by issuing a ticket through your normal Computer Reservations System (CRS) procedure.

A flight's inventory can have numerous airfare discount levels depending on the route and competitive market conditions. These price levels are subject to change by the various carriers depending on a variety of conditions they feel are necessary to review in determining the flight or route's profitability. Thus, these fares may rise and fall a number of times and may change at the carrier's discretion, sometimes daily. Therefore, an airfare is only guaranteed after the ticket is purchased.

While you will find yourself today competing with Internet deals, the fares you get from Consolidators will often be more than competitive than what your client may find on the Web. Also, when buying from the internet, the purchase must be immediate, while through a consolidator, you will often have at least 7 days before you must purchase the ticket, giving your client time to make the proper considerations. While the clients' perception is that the best deals are on the Internet, the reality is that there are often better deals or buying conditions that you can provide with a little searching and creativity.

## Focus on Travel Agents

Sky Bird Travel and most consolidators do not sell directly to the consumer and will not compete with you in the marketplace. Our fares can be accessed through the 4 major Global Distribution Systems (GDS) – Amadeus, Galileo, Sabre or Worldspan, directly through our web site which requires an ARC, IATA or CLIA number. You are our partners, not our competitors.

For more information regarding using a consolidator in general and Sky Bird in particular, you can access our website. As you read through the information, you will find that there are numerous reasons why you should be using a consolidator for all of your international travel. With over 60 airline contracts, there are more than enough ways we can assist in helping you making a profit while satisfying your customers.

Sky Bird Travel is entering its 33rd year in business. We are a worldwide consolidator covering all of the continents on the globe from all points in the U.S. and are a participating member of USACA.

For more information on our programs as well as money making suggestions, call Sal Prezioso, Director of Sales and Special Projects at 888-759-2473; or E-mail [sal@skybird-travel.com](mailto:sal@skybird-travel.com); [www.skybirdfares.com](http://www.skybirdfares.com)

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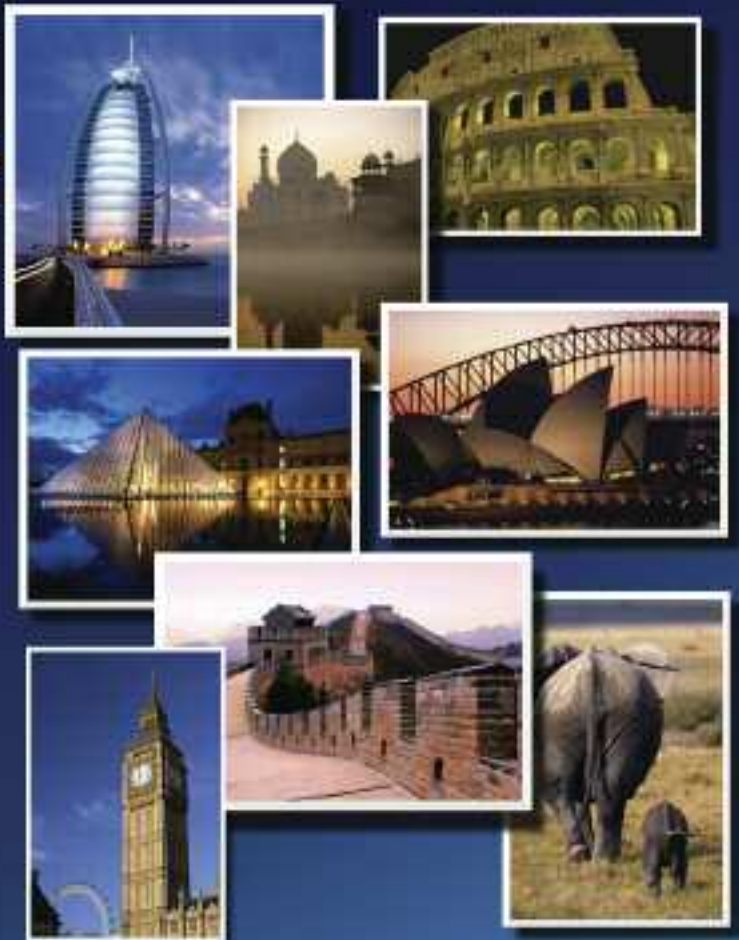
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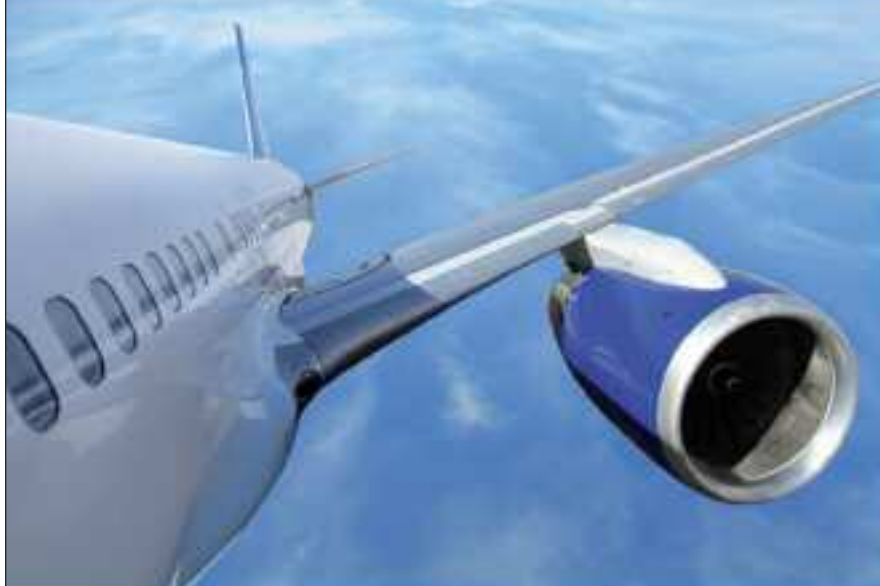
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# JAX FAX Travel Marketing Magazine is The Travel Agents' Source for Consolidator Airfares

For 37 years JAX FAX has been bringing Travel Agents and Air Consolidators together. Today, more than ever, it is important for Travel Agents to use Air Consolidators when booking airfares



for your clients. JAX FAX is now bringing you several tools you can use to research and book consolidator airfares. One of these tools is the digital version of JAX FAX monthly magazine; which you can find on our website at [www.jaxfaxmagazine.com](http://www.jaxfaxmagazine.com). This digital version includes the entire magazine, plus additional features, and is completely interactive. This means that every URL and E-mail address is live and suppliers are just a click away!

## Consolidator Air Listings in Each Monthly Issue of JAX FAX

In second portion of every issue, separated by a tabbed insert, are JAX FAX listings of consolidator airfares to virtually every country in the world. Listings (sample below) are in geographical order by country and destination city. These listings include airfare, class of service and are color coded for easy spotting; black listings are coach, green listings are first & business class, red include land packages and blue listings are cruise packages. Consolidators are also listed on the last page of the magazine (and E-magazine) in the Directory of Advertiser including full contact information and business location.

TRIP DEPARTING TYPE	# DAYS	ROUND TRIP PRICE MIN	MAX	SUPPLIER	VALIDITY PERIOD	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	LABELS
<b>RUSSIA</b>							<b>COUNTRY</b>
<b>NEW YORK</b>							<b>CITY FROM/TO</b>
DAILY	BUSINESS	\$ 2050	Net \$ 3250	<b>To:MOSCOW</b>	ALL YEAR	CALL FOR OTHER	<b>COLOR</b>
DAILY	SKED AIR	\$ 357	Net	ARROW TRAVEL	FROM 3/1/09	BIZ NETS AVBL;800-321-	<b>CODED</b>
DAILY	SKED TUR	\$ 329		CROWN PETERS	1/5/09-3/20/09	WWW.CZECHVACATIONS	<b>LISTINGS</b>
VARY	SHIP PKG	11 \$ 1200	\$ 1760	CZECH VACATIONS	ALL YEAR	877-268-2677;VISA SVCS;	
				RUSSIAN AMERICAN CONSULT.			

## JAX FAX Weekly Consolidator Update Email Blast



Every Wednesday morning JAX FAX sends out an email blast to our subscribers giving them the latest information on up-to-the-minute Air Consolidator offerings.

To receive this free Weekly eNews please sign up at: [www.jaxfaxmagazine.com/signup.html](http://www.jaxfaxmagazine.com/signup.html)

## ConsoliFares is JAX FAX's Online Consolidator Air Booking Engine

JAX FAX offers an online booking engine for Consolidator Airfares. On this booking engine, travel agents can compare fares from several different consolidators, check availability, book flights and add your own markup. **This service is free** for JAX FAX Magazine subscribers. To sign up go to: [www.jaxfax.com](http://www.jaxfax.com) and click on the "Agent Tools" menu bar and then click on "Air Booking Engine".

*Look for an enhanced version of this booking system coming soon!*



For additional information visit [www.jaxfax.com](http://www.jaxfax.com) or [www.jaxfaxmagazine.com](http://www.jaxfaxmagazine.com)

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**CENTRAV INC.**  
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**COSMOPOLITAN TRAVEL SERVICE**  
[www.ctsfares.com](http://www.ctsfares.com)

**DER AIR and CAR**  
[www.der.com](http://www.der.com)

**D-FW TOURS**  
[www.dfwtours.com](http://www.dfwtours.com)

**GRAND HOLIDAYS**  
[grandholidays.net](http://grandholidays.net)

**GTT GLOBAL**  
[www.gttglobal.com](http://www.gttglobal.com)

**HARIWORLD**  
[www.hariworld.com](http://www.hariworld.com)

**INTERNATIONAL AIR CONSOLIDATORS**  
[www.iacfares.com](http://www.iacfares.com)

**PICASSO TRAVEL**  
[www.picassotravel.com](http://www.picassotravel.com)

**SKYLINK TRAVEL**  
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