

## *Travel Challenges at the Top 10 Busiest US Airports*

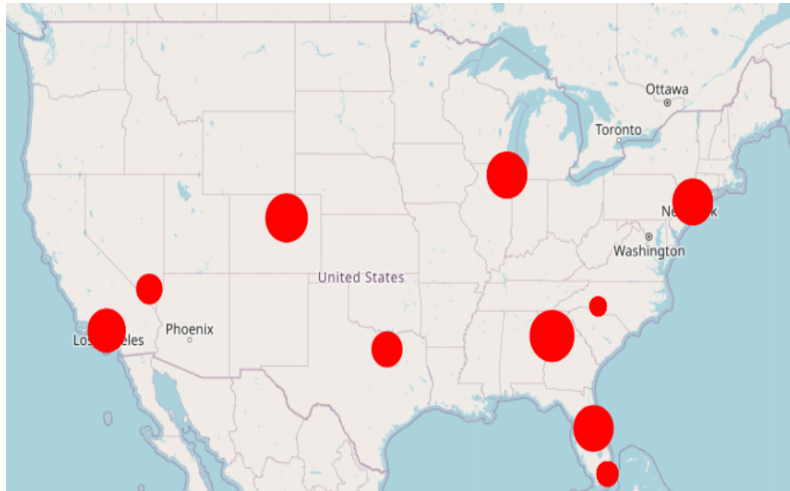
As we get closer to summer vacation, and with spring break right around the corner, now is the perfect time to start planning your family's dream vacation! I know when you are deciding on your destination there are many thoughts at play, the distance, the views, and sometimes the relaxation however have you considered travel experience? With travel often taking up a large portion of our vacation time, decisions you make in this regard can greatly affect your vacation experience.

Airports are a centerpiece for vacation travel with many factors influencing each experience had by their customers. To gain a better understanding of the pros and cons of airport travel I did a deeper dive into the top 10 busiest US Airports according to AFAR Magazine (<https://www.afar.com/magazine/busiest-airports-in-the-us>) and the TSA complaints surrounding each of them.

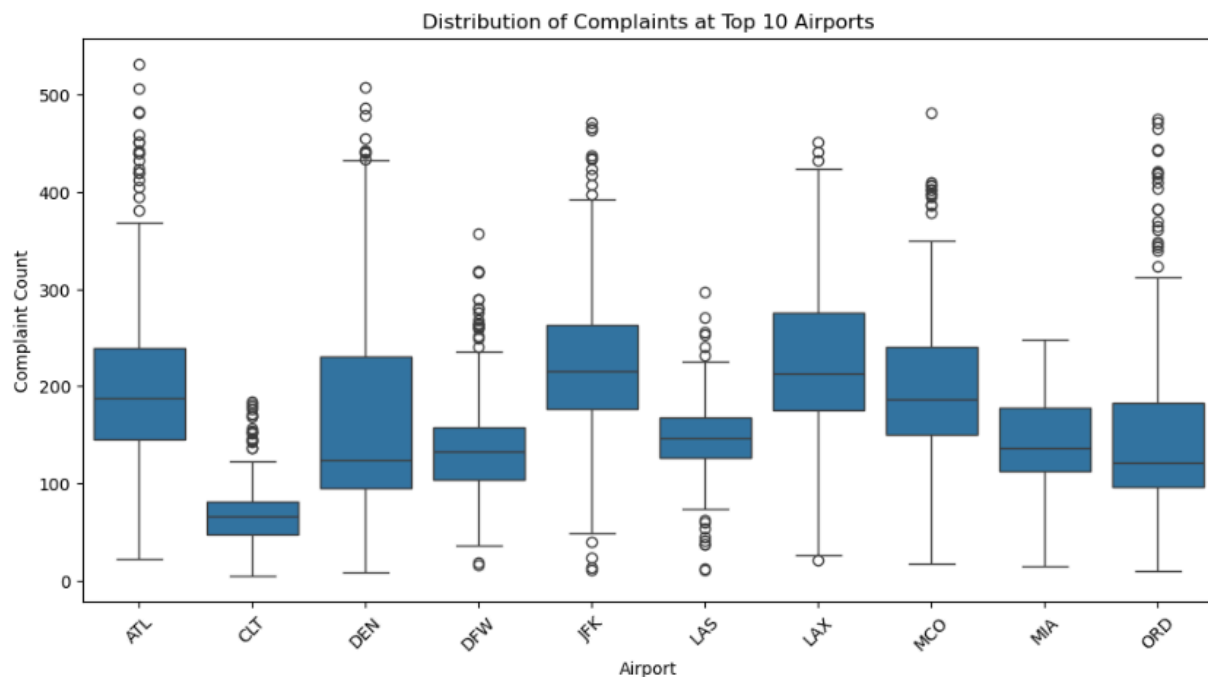
The top 10 busiest airports according to AFAR Magazine were determined to be:

1. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL)
  - Atlanta, Georgia
2. Dallas–Fort Worth International Airport (DFW)
  - Dallas, Texas
3. Denver International Airport (DEN)
  - Denver, Colorado
4. Los Angeles International Airport (LAX)
  - Los Angeles, California
5. Chicago's O'Hare International Airport (ORD)
  - Chicago, Illinois
6. John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York (JFK)
  - Queens, NYC
7. Orlando International Airport (MCO)
  - Orlando, Florida
8. Harry Reid International Airport in Las Vegas (LAS)
  - Las Vegas, Nevada
9. Charlotte Douglas International Airport (CLT)
  - Charlotte, North Carolina
10. Miami International Airport (MIA)
  - Miami, Florida

These airports are pivotal locations for vacation travel with many of them being in top tourist areas like New York City, Theme Parks, Casinos, etc and others being major connection areas between major domestic and international flights.

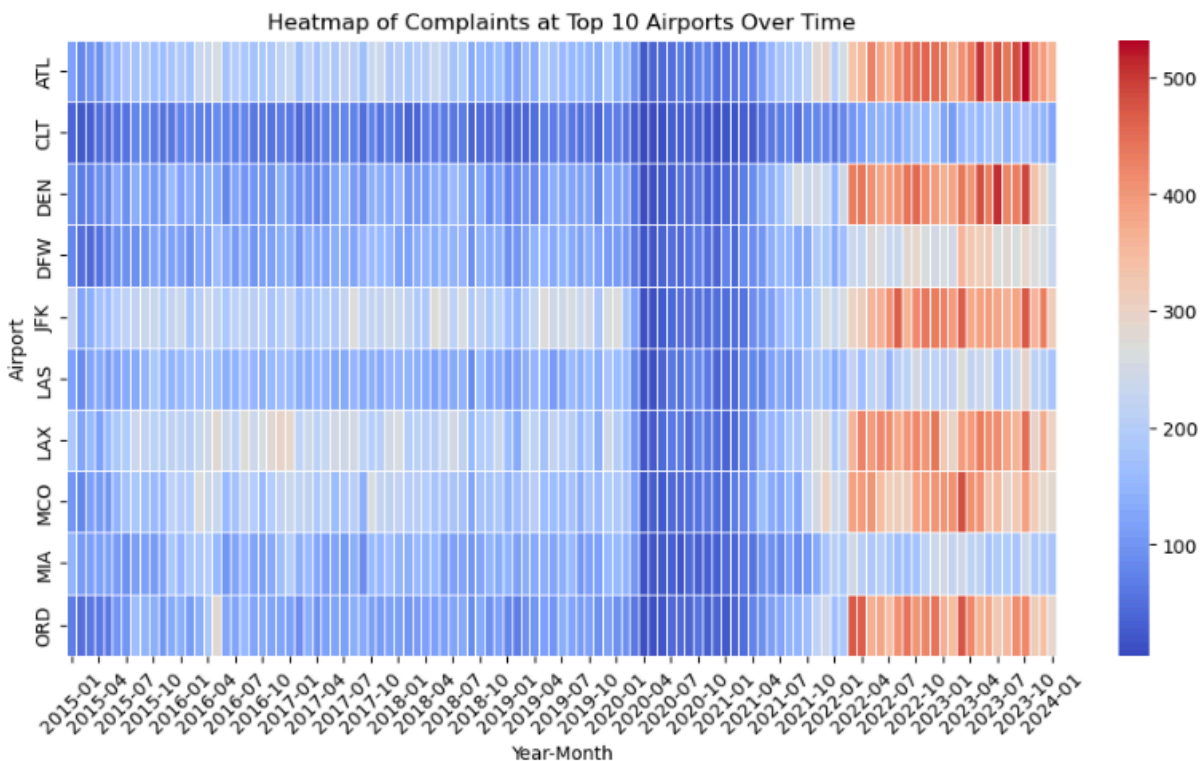


When comparing the TSA complaint numbers of each of these airports we can see the spread of these complaints across the country in the visualization to the left. Locations with major destinations such as Orlando, FL, Queens, NY, Atlanta, GA and Chicago, IL had noticeably higher complaint levels compared to locations that were lower on the top busiest airport list.



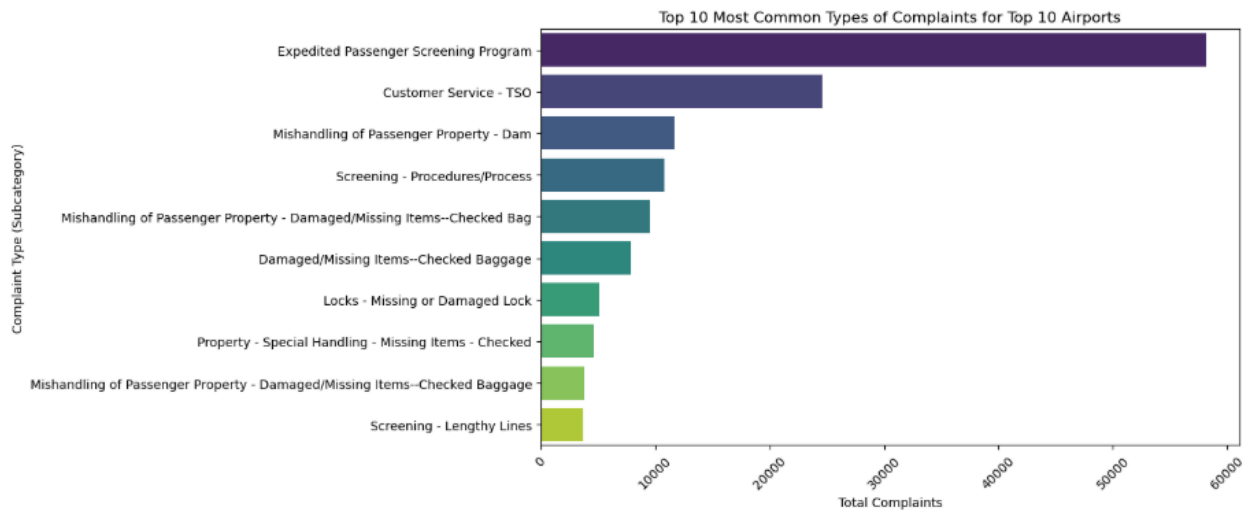
By taking a closer look at this TSA data we will gain insight in best ways to travel, and important insights of challenges you may run across when you and your family are on route to your destination. For example with ATL, DEN, LAX, and JFK being high with complaint levels these may not be the best airport locations for any travelers who are hoping for a more relaxing and laid back travel experience. Instead for these specific travelers considering CLT, MIA or LAS would be likely to bring easier and less stressful travel plans.

Now that we know which airports have the highest level of complaints it is time to better understand the complaints overall.



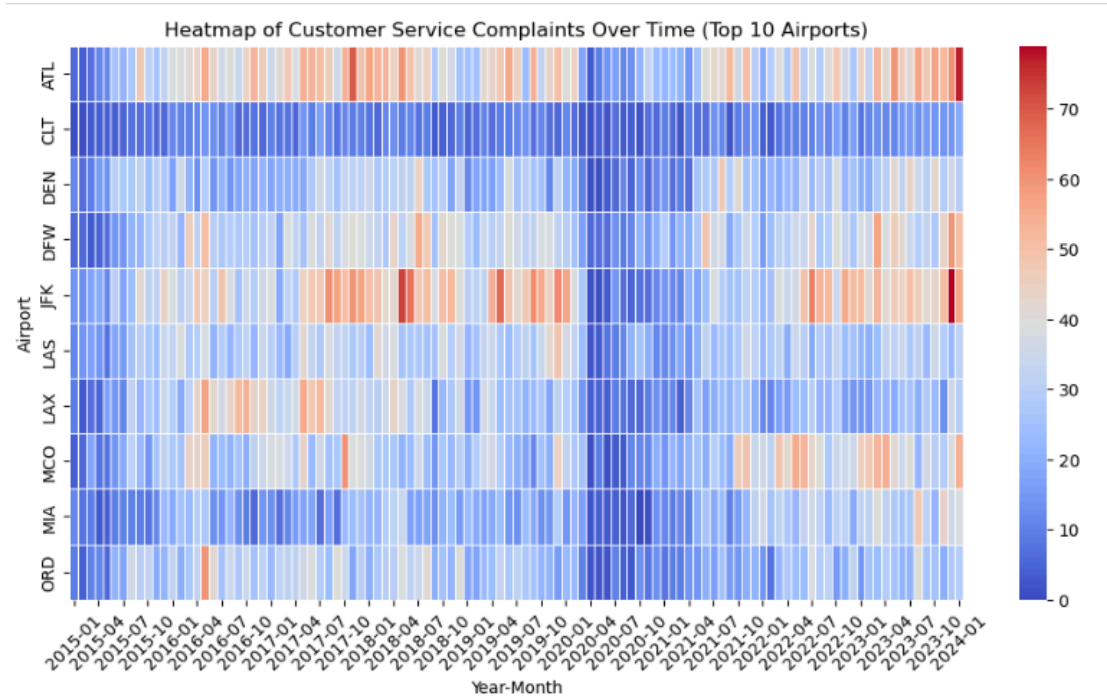
By looking at the complaint rate for each of the airports over time we can see interesting consistent trends. There were consistently low complaint levels until 2020 with an extreme dip in complaints from 2020 - 2021 due to the COVID 19 pandemic and the impact this had on travel numbers. Across all airports analyzed there is a major spike in complaints starting in 2022, at the same time as a new deployment of TSA Pre Check Touchless Identity Solution (For a deeper look into what this service entails I recommend checking out this American Airlines article from 2022: <https://news.aa.com/news/news-details/2022/American-Airlines-Launches-Mobile-ID-With-TSA-PreCheck-OPS-OTH-06/default.aspx>).

To gain a better understanding of what specific issues these TSA complaints entail I next found the top 10 most common complaint types. This will help show the most common issues that arise for travelers at these popular airports.



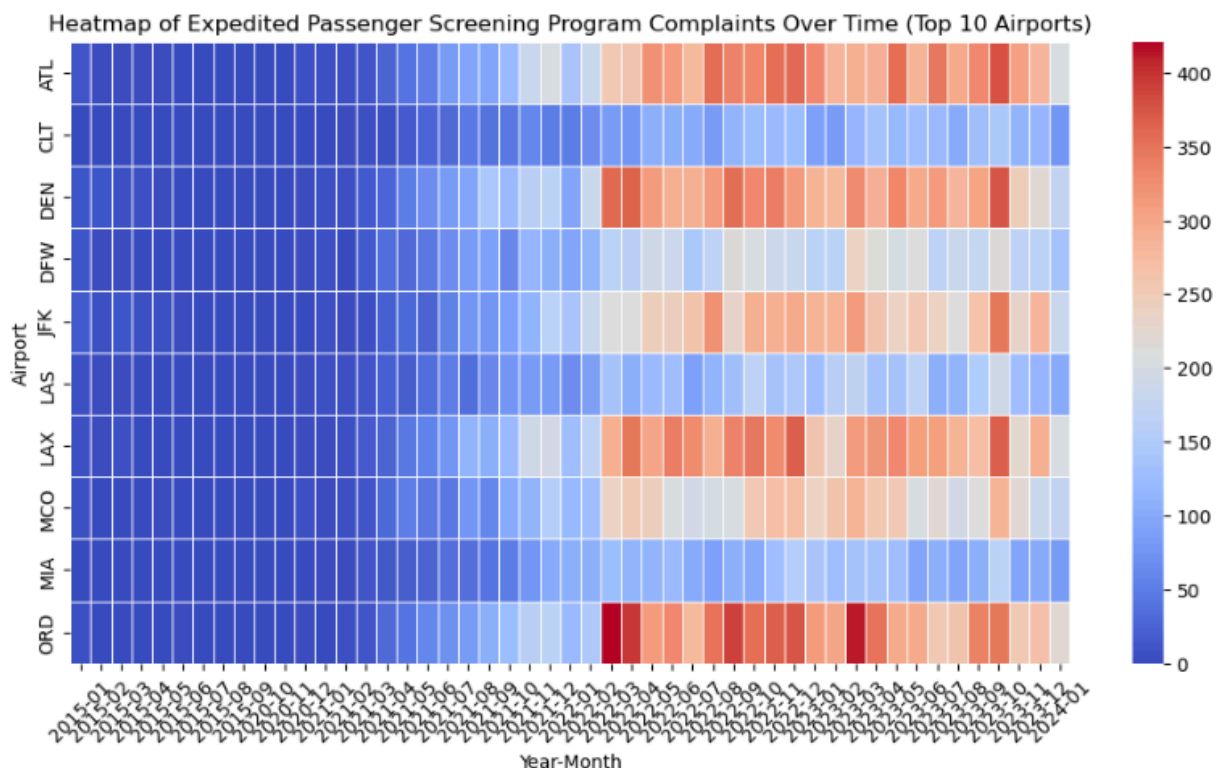
In this we can see that “Expedited Passenger Screening Program” (TSA Precheck) received nearly 3 times more complaints than the second most common complaint type. The second most common complaint type was “Customer Service” which also had a large lead ahead of the next highest complaint type. This finding helps give context to the heat map visualization above, specifically the higher level of complaints that are seen starting in 2022 when TSA Precheck Touchless Identity Solution was beginning to be implemented.

With these 2 complaint types being major factors in the TSA complaints, to begin let's take a closer look to see what insight can be gained, starting with customer service complaints.



Here again we can see the major dip in complaints around the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020 due to the lower travel rates during the time. We can also see that JFK and ATL are leading amongst all of the listed airports when it comes to customer service complaints. While across all measured months CLT consistently had the lowest number of customer service complaints this could be due to better customer service for guests or may be due to the lower number of customers this airport sees in comparison to the others in the analysis.

Next let's take a look at the highest concentration topic of complaints for TSA complaints and focus on the Expedited Passenger Screening to see if these issues are consistent through time.



With this we can see the major spike in 2022 likely due to the roll out of the new touchless technology. Interestingly the level of complaints is not consistent across all of the airports analyzed and MIA, LAS, and CLT showed lower levels of issues with these complaints however this can be due to these being the airports with the lower number of customers. The issue was consistent amongst the higher capacity airports with ORD seeming to have the largest amounts.

While deciding what your next chosen vacation location should be, keep these things in mind. If you plan to utilize TSA Precheck make sure to give yourself plenty of time to navigate the area on the day of travel. In addition make sure in advance that your TSA Precheck status on your flight is correct. The TSA recommends contacting them within 72 hours of experiencing any issues with your TSA Precheck to give plenty of time for TSA to troubleshoot the issue. More information on this can be found on the TSA website at: (<https://www.tsa.gov/travel/frequently-asked-questions/i-entered-my-known-traveler-number-ktn-my-reservation-theres-no>).

Finally if you are someone who highly values the relaxation and calm nature of a vacation choosing which airport you use can be essential. JFK, MCO, and ATL are airports you may want to avoid if this is a high concern for your travel. Instead choosing from some that consistently have lower rates of complaints such as CLT and LAS will help make sure the start and end of your vacation is less hectic. No matter where you decide to travel and how I would love to hear more about your experience! Your story can help inspire others, give direction, and potentially help others avoid the same issues you have experienced. The experiences you share may be shared in next months continuation of #AllieTravelsTheWorld Travel Blog.

As always thank you for reading...

And see you on vacation!

XOXO Travel Girl

Author: *Allison Biediger*