



Top 10 most dangerous airports in the world

May 12, 2025 10

Monday newsletters always feature top 10 travel lists to inspire.

Today: Top 10 most dangerous airports in the world

Although flying is one of the safest means of travel, many passengers suffer from a **fear of flying**, including myself. That said, some airport approaches are a lot more challenging than others, and can turn a plane landing into a terrifying experience that makes the bravest frequent flyers grip their armrests. From mountain ranges and oceans to less than half a mile runways, here are ten of the most dangerous airports in the world, where landings and takeoffs require extreme precision and massive pilot skill.

There is more information (with YouTube videos) below the slideshow. Think I missed one? Leave a comment.



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10. GIBRALTAR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, BRITISH OVERSEAS TERRITORY

The runway at Gibraltar's airport crosses the main road in and out of the British Overseas Territory, and consequently traffic has to be closed every time a plane lands or departs. The resultant traffic jams have led to the construction of a tunnel under the runway, but the project has been plagued by delays and is still not complete. However, the highway crossing isn't the main issue for pilots.; it's the strong turbulence and wind shear around the Rock of Gibraltar and across the Bay of Algeiras that makes landings here a challenging affair and particularly uncomfortable. Diversions and go-arounds are common, especially in winter.



9. PRINCESS JULIANA AIRPORT, ST MAARTEN

The notorious Princess Juliana Airport on the Caribbean island of Saint Martin is famous around the world for its low landings over the ocean, owing to one end of its single 7,546 ft (2,300 m) long runway being extremely close to the shore. The proximity of Maho Beach to the runway has made the airport one of the world's most favorite places for a perfect Instagram shot, as the landing jets appear to be just feet above the heads of the public just before touchdown while takeoff creates huge gusts of wind and sand for sunbathers. It's not without danger though; in 2017 a New Zealand woman died from injuries sustained by jet blast from a departing aircraft.



8. INNSBRUCK AIRPORT, AUSTRIA

The Austrian city of Innsbruck is surrounded by the magnificent peaks of the Austrian Alps, which attract planes full of skiers every winter. But most don't know that Innsbruck's airport represents a huge challenge for their pilots. Located in a deep valley in the middle of the mountains, it requires aircrafts to

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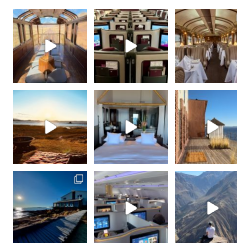
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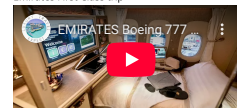


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maintain a high safety altitude before diving onto the runway. This already challenging manoeuvring is often made even harder by the valley's vicious winds and currents, which pilots have to deal with throughout the process. To top things off, there is limited possibility for a missed approach given the high altitude peaks that surround the airport. Since 29 February 1964, when an Bristol Britannia 312 (British Eagle Airlines) crashed into a southern mountain Glungezer (2610m), only special trained pilots are allowed to land in Innsbruck.



7. TONCONTIN AIRPORT, HONDURAS

The approach to Toncontin Airport, located near the capital of Honduras, has long been considered to be one of the most dangerous in the world, especially in inclement weather condition. The mountainous terrain surrounding the small airport forces pilots to make a dramatic approach that's anything but head on, with a steep decent and a sharp turn prior to lining up with the runway. It's also one of the world's deadliest airports. In 1989, a Boeing commercial plane crashed into a mountainside on approach, killing 132 people. At least 5 more planes have since followed suit and crashed in or around the airport. A new airport is currently being constructed in Comayagua to replace Toncontin International Airport.



6. MADEIRA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, PORTUGAL

Madeira International Airport Cristiano Ronaldo, formerly known as Funchal Airport, on the Portuguese archipelago of Madeira in the Atlantic Ocean is considered one of the most dangerous airports in the world due to its spectacular construction. The original runway was only 1,600 m (5,249 ft) long, but was extended to 2,781 m (9,124 ft) after a fatal plane crash in 1977 (164 people died when a Boeing 727 fell off the end of the runway onto the beach below). The runway extension is supported by 180 columns (partly over the ocean) which have to withstand serious shock loading during landings. The airport is also dangerous due to strong winds, high mountains on one side and the ocean on the other. Pilots must undergo additional training to land at the airport.



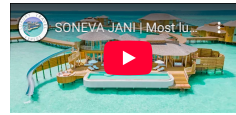
5. TENZING-HILLARY AIRPORT, NEPAL

Tenzing-Hillary Airport – also known as Lukla Airport – in Nepal is the prime airport for anyone who is visiting Mt. Everest. The runway is surrounded on all sides by steep Himalayan terrain, with a mountain shelf on one side and a steep drop into the valley below on the other side. The airport runway is extremely short at just 527 m (1,729 ft) long, although it also slopes uphill with a gradient of almost 12%, which helps planes to slow down in time. To make matters worse, there is no go-around procedure because of the surrounding mountains. Given these factors, only helicopters and small fixed-wing propeller planes are permitted to land. Since 1973, there have been several accidents on the airport that have resulted in many deaths and injuries.



3. COURCHEVEL AIRPORT, FRANCE

While the airport at Lukla has a dangerously short runway of only 527 m (1,729 ft), the one at Courchevel Airport is even shorter at 525 m (1,722 feet). This airport – which serves the exclusive ski resort of Courchevel in the French Alps – drops off in a cliff as well, so pilots need to make sure they gain enough speed for takeoff if they don't want to fall off the cliff's edge. The runway also has a downward gradient of 18.6%, which further complicates takeoff and landing. Moreover, on approach or during takeoff, pilots have to maneuver their aircraft between the Alps without instrument procedures; the only clear guideline is a no-go-round due to the surrounding mountains.



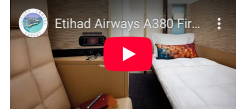
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3. JUANCHO E. YRAUSQUIN AIRPORT, SABA ISLAND

Juancho E. Yrausquin Airport is located approximately 45 km (28 mi) south of St Maarten, on the minuscule Dutch Caribbean island of Saba, also known as the original King Kong movie island. With a runway of only 400 m (1300 ft) in total length, this makes it the world's shortest commercial airport runway. The airport is wedged on a rocky outcrop at the foot of a mountain, with jagged terrain on one side and cliffs dropping into the sea at the other ends of the runway, so any landing here is a nerve-wracking challenge. Although the airport is closed to jet traffic, regional airline propeller aircraft are able to land there under waivers from The Netherlands Antilles' Civil Aviation Authority.



2. GUSTAV III AIRPORT, ST BARTS

Nestled in the heart of the French Antilles, the Caribbean island of St Barts is world-famous for its luxurious lifestyle, pristine beaches, and vibrant culture. It's only airport – Gustaf III Airport – is also known to be one of the most challenging airports in the world. The airport's short airstrip – only 640 m (2,100 ft) in length – is at the base of a gentle slope ending directly on the beach. The arrival descent into runway is extremely steep, narrowly passing over the hilltop and its traffic circle; departing planes fly right over the heads of sunbathers (although small signs advise sunbathers not to lie directly at the end of the runway). Due to the demanding approach and landing, pilots must undergo specific training and receive special certification to operate flights in and out of St Barts. Below you can watch my YouTube video featuring the full landing sequence at St Barts.

- **Review:** read my review of my flight from St Maarten to St Barts [here](#).



1. PARO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, BHUTAN

Paro is Bhutan's sole international airport. The tiny airport is nestled in a deep valley and surrounded by sharp peaks of up to 5,500 m (18,000 ft) tall. Strong winds whip through the valley, often resulting in severe turbulence. Considered the most dangerous airport in the world, flights are only allowed during daytime and under visual meteorological conditions in which pilots make their judgements by eye rather than relying on aircraft instruments. The dramatic approach to the runway is completely out of site for the pilots until the last minute as they manoeuvre between mountains at a 45-degree angle before dropping quickly onto the runway. Only a limited number of pilots are authorized to land at Paro. Below you can watch my YouTube video featuring the full landing sequence at Paro Airport.

- **Review:** read my review of my flight from Paro to New Delhi [here](#).



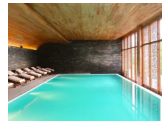
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10 COMMENTS

Brian says:

OCTOBER 7, 2019 AT 2:25 PM

It seems so sensational when "dangerous" and "airports" are combined in the same sentence.

All airports, especially ones served by commercial airlines are anything but "dangerous".

"Challenging," might be a much more appropriate term- approaches or crosswinds or terrain make the approaches and departures a more central consideration but its only dangerous if there is real danger. Real danger is swimming in shark or crocodile-infested waters or telling your Mother-in-Law to go to Hell.

I'm particularly disappointed that a website that promotes travel- including air travel would also share such drivel.

Professionals fly in and out of these airports carrying anywhere from a few dozen to several thousand passengers every day without incident.

Are these airports *really* dangerous, or do we just want to scare people for no real reason?

lookingforthehigherself says:

OCTOBER 7, 2019 AT 4:14 PM

I have a fear of flying and this post terrifies me further...

Vlado Orlandich says:

OCTOBER 7, 2019 AT 5:22 PM

I'm sincerely grateful to the Author of this Famous and Unique Channel for his friendliness and useful and undoubtedly important information for us !

I sincerely wish the Channel Author : let the state of a Happy Man never leave his heart !

*** For those who are afraid to fly by plane : according to official information I.C.A.O. there are 2 tragic cases per 1 million flights.

Sincerely Yours , Vlado.

AmandaB says:

OCTOBER 7, 2019 AT 7:55 PM

I think you have missed out St Helena Island a British Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic Ocean.

John Stokes says:

OCTOBER 7, 2019 AT 10:03 PM

The Eyjafjallajökull Volcano is in Iceland.

Swiss Traveler says:

OCTOBER 8, 2019 AT 11:04 AM

Ouch, I will fly to Paro next year ... Hoping for the best!

Indah zakaria says:

OCTOBER 9, 2019 AT 1:49 PM

I think u sud consider the airport in Papua Indonesia...cos almost all airports around that island are dengerous...that why many accident happened there...

Ashmita Gurung says:

APRIL 10, 2023 AT 10:18 AM

I highly encourage you to take a flight at Tenzing Hilary Airport while doing Everest base camp trek

AmandaB says:

MAY 12, 2025 AT 2:43 PM

I think you have missed St Helena Island airport off your list. With big wind shear issues, the once weekly flights are often cancelled on the day, sometimes for 2 days, and sometimes completely meaning a week till the next one. Pilots have to be specially trained and only small planes can land (or not)

Catherine Pieters says:

MAY 13, 2025 AT 12:00 AM

As I scrolled down the list I really thought St. Bart was going to ne number one! I was Wong!

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