

Airports

by [Cynthia Drescher](#) December 8, 2017

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Flights from small airports are typically more expensive—but there are a few reasons you may want to stay local.

Flying from hometown airports doesn't always mean paying high prices for airfare.

It's finally time to [book that trip](#), but you're torn between a flight from your small, hometown airport and a lower-priced option out of a large airport 65 miles away. The obvious answer may be to save money and prepare for a drive to the major hub, but there are reasons to consider that often overlooked, smaller airport.

Every passenger counts

Think of small airports [like independent bookstores](#). Choosing to patronize them over larger, potentially cheaper options is a vote for their continued existence and, hopefully, expansion. Every passenger is a value taken into consideration when airlines make service decisions, whether that's [adding new cities](#), increasing the number of

flights to current destinations, or simply upgrading the type and size of aircraft serving the airport.

In August, the tiny but mighty Toledo Express Airport in Ohio, located a one-hour, construction-riddled drive from [Detroit Metro International Airport](#), inaugurated a new American Airlines route to Charlotte, North Carolina. From Charlotte, Toledo's fliers may now connect to more than 650 daily departures to over 150 destinations in 24 countries. This achievement for the small airport—which normally sees fewer than 200,000 passengers annually—was made possible thanks to passenger feedback asking for additional routes and help from a U.S. Department of Transportation grant to promote small airports. More routes mean more flights, which means more available seats to sell. And more seats to sell equals more options at lower fares.

Lighter transport—and less stress

Central Illinois Regional Airport (BMI) may not have a sexy name or long-haul flights, but this airport in Bloomington, Illinois, a two-hour drive from both Chicago's Midway and O'Hare International airports, provides one major perk both of those do not: free parking. There is no fine print, as even the long-term parking lots are complimentary to travelers departing BMI, providing a savings of \$17 per day (the parking rate at O'Hare). Free airport parking is hardly a Central Illinois-only incentive: Several other smaller airports that

do not charge include Flagstaff, Arizona; Valdosta, Georgia; Pellston, Michigan; and Santa Maria, California.