

End of an era as paper airline tickets dropped from June 1

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The paper airline ticket comes to the end of its life on Sunday when 240 carriers belonging to the world association IATA switch to all electronic ticketing, much of it through Internet booking.

IATA members account for 94 percent of world airline traffic and by the end of February, 94 percent of them had already abandoned the rectangle of stiff paper in favour of digital technology.

In Africa, 87 percent of IATA airlines had made the switch.

The last paper tickets will be sold on Saturday, and the International Air Transport Association estimates that its member airlines will save three billion dollars (1.9 billion euros) a year, a much needed economy in the face of a huge rise in fuel costs.

"From June 1, no travel agent will be able to issue a paper ticket," an IATA spokesman said.

However, paper tickets issued before the deadline will still be valid for the travel dates indicated on them.

The issue and handling of a paper ticket costs an airline 10 dollars: its electronic replacement one dollar on average.

IATA also calculates that the end of the paper ticket will save 50,000 trees per year.

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