



300 million people are expected to travel this holiday season, but is inflight water good to drink?
(Credit:OceanFishing_iStock498490757.jpg)

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Airline Water Study Raises Concerns for New Year Flyers as Global Air Travel Peaks, Warns Bluewater

Stockholm, Sweden, January 30, 2025 -- As millions of people take to the skies over the New Year holiday, one of the busiest travel periods of the year, a new airline water study released this week raises questions about the safety of drinking water served onboard commercial flights, warns Bluewater, a global leader in water purification and sustainable beverage solutions.

The [2026 Airline Water Study](#), released by New York-based nonprofit Center for Food as Medicine & Longevity, found that the quality of inflight drinking water on U.S. airlines varies widely by carrier. The research shows that several airlines supplied water that may fall short of quality standards set under the U.S. Aircraft Drinking Water Rule (ADWR), introduced in 2011 to protect passengers and crew.

While the study focuses on the United States, Bluewater says the findings are relevant far beyond North America.



“The results point to an inflight water quality issue that is unlikely to be confined to one country,” said David Noble, Bluewater spokesperson. “Many parts of the world lack comparable transparency or independent monitoring of aircraft drinking water, yet face the same challenges of inflight storage tanks, stagnant water systems and inconsistent servicing.”

The study examined three years of airline compliance data, from October 2022 to September 2025, ranking 10 major and 11 regional airlines using a Water Safety Score based on five criteria, including bacterial violations, E. coli breaches, public notices, and how often aircraft water systems were disinfected and flushed.

According to Charles Platkin, PhD, JD, MPH, director of the Center, Delta Air

Lines and Frontier Airlines achieved the highest scores, followed closely by Alaska Airlines. “At the other end of the scale, several large carriers performed poorly, and most regional airlines showed substantial room for improvement,” he said.

In total, researchers analysed 35,674 water samples, finding that 2.66% tested positive for total coliform bacteria, an indicator of potential contamination. The study also identified 32 E. coli violations, the most serious category under the rule. Enforcement emerged as another concern, with civil penalties described as rare.

For travellers, the findings highlight a familiar dilemma.

“Air passengers are rarely given easy access to filtered water at international and regional airports to refill reusable bottles,” said Noble, Bluewater’s Chief Communications Officer. “That leaves people choosing between airline tap water or single-use plastic bottles – neither of which is ideal.”



Concerns extend beyond aircraft cabins. Research by the U.S. Geological Survey and other authorities has detected PFAS ‘forever chemicals’ and microplastics in tap water in multiple countries, underlining the need for effective filtration wherever water is consumed.

The Center advises passengers to reduce risk by choosing sealed bottled drinks, avoiding tea or coffee made with onboard water, and using alcohol-based hand sanitiser rather than tap water in aircraft bathrooms.

Editor Notes

According to preliminary industry estimates, [quoted by the Financial Times](#), more than 300 million passengers around the world are expected to fly between mid-December and early January.

For more information about Bluewater, please contact David Noble at david.noble@bluewatergroup.com.

About Bluewater

Founded in 2013 in Stockholm, Sweden, Bluewater aims to be the world's most planet-friendly water purification and beverage company. The company markets hydration solutions designed for home, work and public settings, with products used by consumers, hospitality businesses, venues, events and educational institutions worldwide. Bluewater has received multiple international design and innovation awards, including two Fast Company World Changing Ideas Awards as well as 2024 and 2025 GOOD DESIGN® Awards. <https://www.bluewatergroup.com>

Founded 2013 in Stockholm, Sweden, Bluewater has set its sights on being the world's most planet-friendly water purification and beverage company by innovating and marketing disruptive hydration solutions for home, work, and play. Bluewater products are available globally to consumers, hotel and catering operations, event and venue organizations, and educational institutions. www.bluewatergroup.com^[IG1]

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