

Business Name: **Spirit Airlines**

L No products are labeled in the menu. While most of us may know the common ingredients in prepackaged products such as Cheese Its and Pringles, Allergen/Ingredient lists are not listed in the menu on board and not available in the app or online on their website. It is intimidating to navigate this as you will have a small window when they pass by for their service. You can ask the flight attendant to check on a certain product and they'll have to read the ingredients list themselves, which takes time and slows down their service for other passengers. (Allergen guides would also be helpful and efficient for the flight attendants 😊).

Score of 0/10

A Spirit Airlines is a company that markets its services as a low cost carrier. In order to offer discounted seats, they offer few amenities. There is no in-flight-entertainment, and only Wi-Fi for pay, and on the many flights I've been on, 50% of the time Wi-Fi is non-existing or not functioning. Plan ahead for this. Spirit advertises they have the best Wi-Fi of any airline (based on public data?) but I haven't been able to prove this true at all. Most of the time speed is at 1-2 mb or non-functional. Chat for a refund after if you can stand to wait the 2 hours for the agent to answer. You will have to pay for all snacks and drinks, including water. If you are part of the free spirit (frequent flyer) loyalty program, only the top tier (gold) will get you a free non-alcoholic beverage and dessert. It is worth noting as an amenity that when you purchase a coffee they do come with unlimited refills. The best amenity they have is their 'big seats', which you have to pay an additional charge for. Their planes are equipped with the front 2 rows, 8 seats which are configured in a two-by-two design. I have flown in domestic first class on United and American and I have to say the chairs are fairly comparable. Don't mistake - it's not first class, and you will not get any of the standard extras that come with first class - but the seat is amazing instead of sitting in the tight 3-by-3 configuration that the rest of the plane is designed for.

Score of 4/10

C An empty sitting plane does not generate any revenue. Spirit, like all airlines, need to change over their flights as quickly as possible. With their on-time rating of 60% (Forbes.com) they are constantly doing their best to improve and therefore turning over the plane as quickly as possible is more important than cleanliness. A cleaning crew does exist (I've seen them from inside the terminal) of 4-5 people who enter the plane and have about 5 minutes of cleaning time in between flights. This is hardly enough time to clean thoroughly so be expected to find crumbs on the floor, and on your seat. It's common the bathroom is not stocked, and I can't say

when (or if ever) the floors are ever mopped clean. I recommend bringing some wet wipes to wipe down your seat, the arm rests, and the tray table (99% chance your tray table is never clean). Let us remind ourselves again that Spirit's mission is about being the best value, not the cleanest. Standing against other low-cost carriers, sadly, the cleanliness (or lack thereof) is to be expected. They don't get a zero because it's not the worst I've ever seen.

Score of 4/10

F Our taste buds change at 30,000 feet. Their coffee is not horrible, but it's not good either. I am a coffee master (I love coffee!) For coffee to be really good of course you need to start with good coffee, but you also need good, clean filtered water. I fear that most airlines do not take their water quality on planes seriously enough, especially when it comes to coffee, and Spirit would be no exception here. Like I mentioned earlier, you can get free refills but on long flights, sometimes they'll offer you the same coffee they brewed 3 hours ago and it's not hot anymore. Make sure to ask them nicely to make you a fresh pot 😊. The prepacked items taste fine and they're what you would expect (but with sticker shock).

Score of 5/10

A In most major airlines, the job of the flight attendant is always safety but also serving the passengers. In the many flights I have taken with Spirit, it is reiterated by the flight crew constantly that their function is safety only. Spirit publishes that they have a vision of providing an extraordinary guest experience. In my many flights with spirit (oh this is where I should mention that I'm a gold member and have flown over 40 flights with them) I have found them far from meeting this vision all the time. This is where I need to do a shoutout - On a flight from Hartford to Orlando, flight attendant Paula! She successfully created an extraordinary guest experience with me and my family. We were flying to Disney for the first time, and not only did she share awesome tips about rides and restaurants at the park, but she also sang a song for everyone! Her smile and love for her customers was infectious. Another shoutout goes to flight attendant Carmen. I had the privilege of being on her flights three different times. She also sings and has such a pleasant, caring and amazingly positive attitude! Now am I saying that great flight attendants need to sing? Of course not, but it certainly helps. If you've ever been on a flight where you could feel you were a nuisance to the flight crew, you'll know what I'm talking about. I would say in my over 50 flights with Spirit, most flight crews are just 'basic' - they provide their service and then sit and count the minutes for the flight to end. The pilots for the most part never stand outside the cockpit at the end of the flight and thank you, like on other airlines. The gate agents are usually pretty basic and look stressed and overwhelmed. But there are some that stand out for being extraordinary (like the 2 just mentioned) and there are also some who are downright rude. So overall speaking, for a low cost carrier that is focused on saving you money - can you get extraordinary service and feel valued on Spirit? I would say most of the time it's just basic and they don't notice you, but they just do their jobs and your part of the output. More smiles and genuine gratitude are needed for a higher score.

Score of 14/20

C When it comes to comparing their pricing, let's look at it from two different angles. First, they most of the time undercut large U.S. carriers, so on that front they win by entry cost of a ticket. But it's also important to remember that your base ticket price includes nothing - not even a guaranteed seat. If you would like to choose your seat, that's an extra charge, if you would like to bring a carry on bag, that's an extra charge (1 personal item, like a backpack or large purse is free) if you would like the 'big chair', that's an extra charge, if you would like pretzels or water, that's also an extra charge. Many other large domestic carriers will allow you to bring a carry on for no charge, and they offer complimentary snacks and beverages. So be careful of your "total cost" as it could balloon to more than you think. Now the 2nd side of cost is comparing Spirit to other low-cost carriers, and with that they are competitive but sometimes not the cheapest. For the value of what you get, Spirit is a great choice to get you cheaply around for the most part.

Score of 9/10

T Now clearly there are many points of contact and many factors to consider when we think about timeliness of an airline. For Spirit, they have a 60% on-time arrival score (Forbes.com) which puts them behind the major U.S. carriers but ahead of other low cost airlines. Having flown on other companies such as Delta and American, the flight crew makes it a priority to board, and depart, and they're not shy to broadcast this to all the passengers. Spirit does not share this same 'spirit' of haste. Of all the times I've been on Spirit I would have to say that on-time arrivals and departures are a rare occurrence. While they can't control the weather or the air traffic controllers, they are consistency running late. But I think anyone who frequents Spirit has come to accept this fact as a trade off for a lower fare. Then there's the issue of baggage. If you need to check luggage (it's not free by the way - \$50 up to \$85 per bag) it is common to wait 1-2 hours for your baggage to be made available at the carousel from when you depart the airplane. This is unacceptable and the airline does not offer any promise or guarantee of how speedy luggage should be made available. There is no federal regulation on this and while other carriers will offer promises of 30 minutes or less, Spirit severely lags behind on this. Also, I can't forget to mention that when you call or chat with an agent for assistance for anything flight related, be prepared to wait over 2 hours on a typical day. Lastly, since Spirit's mission is low-cost, they need to cut expenses wherever possible. Since it's cheaper for them, you will often find their gates in the most remote parts of the airport terminals, so give yourself extra time to walk. And in many airports where they operate less flights than other carriers they will save money by sharing gates with other flights, often causing delays when you arrive because your gate is unavailable. And because they are not the largest volume carrier in most airports they don't have the same take off priority, which sometimes leads to more delays.

Score of 3/10

O When it comes to Spirit, options are seriously lacking. They have limited options to begin with and when it comes to dairy-free, it only gets bleaker. All of their snacks and beverages are for purchase, and the menu is small. Best bet is plain pringles. If you're taking a long flight, plan to eat before hand or bring some ready made food with you. If desperation sets in, you could ask if they have any plain ramen cups available. They will add hot water for you. The other flavors besides plain contain dairy so please use caution and double check. Flight attendants won't let me read ingredients on packages and sometimes they won't help me, so use caution when ordering because all sales are final.

What could help improve the options grade? How about some dairy-free cookies (they used to offer Oreos and discontinued), dairy-free muffins?

Score of 2/10

R Let's start with arriving at the airport.

First people you see will most likely are ticket counter agents if you're checking luggage in. Don't forget, you have to pay for checking in luggage (unless you're a gold Free-Spirit member you get one complimentary checked luggage). This is where it gets interesting. You will be directed to a "self-tag" luggage machine where you need to scan any identification document you have and pull up your reservation. The ID reader is extremely sensitive and you need to position the ID exactly correct or it will not read properly. Many times the agent who is floating around will need to come over and show how to do this. The computer will then ask you a series of questions and it will print your bag tags. Unless you have done this multiple times, you most likely won't know how to affix the luggage tags properly, and again you will need the agent to help you. After you successfully put your tag on your bag, the agent will allow you to enter the line for dropping off your luggage. You will now wait in line, which can take up to 30 minutes sometimes, for an agent to again look at your identification documentation, weigh your bag, and tell you your fate - 1 of 3 "usual" options: 1) you have to pay additional fees for oversized or heavy luggage or 2) you may proceed to security, or 3) your flight has been cancelled (in which now determines what next steps to take). Make no mistake about it, this process is often frustrating and tiresome. I'm honestly not sure of the time savings gained from having passengers tag their own bags just to then have an agent check everything again, weigh the bag, and move to the conveyer belt. Most passengers are unfamiliar with the process of doing this and require assistance, and often agents will become irritated when you ask for help. There are still airlines where you just walk to the ticket counter, hand over identity documents, and they take care of this process. (I'm sure there must be cost-benefit factors in doing this for budget airlines showing it saves them money - but on a practical and guest service sense - I wholeheartedly disagree) In my experiences, many Spirit ticket agents are not welcoming with a bright smile and genuine attitude for helping. They instead take on the feeling that they have a process, and they see you as potentially not obeying that process, and therefore you need to be instructed, (or even yelled at) rather than being just the customer in need of assistance.

Now you get thru security and arrive at the spirit gate only to find the agents there not excited to see you either. Often they will make announcements every 5 minutes about the carry-on bag warnings and the incurring of additional fees -(\$99 for carry on bags at the gate - ouch!) Now you finally make it to boarding and I'd say 50/50 of flight crew will greet you with a "welcome" and a smile. I've been on some flights that are just amazing - crew that have warm smiles, laughter, are very helpful. Unique to Spirit, (because no planes are equipped with tv monitors) is that each flight they must do the safety briefing in person. Sadly, many flight attendants make this feel painful and lack any genuine enthusiasm for their job. I completely understand this is a safety demonstration, and safety should always be taken seriously. But I have witnessed many times when crew are passionate about this briefing, and trust me - you can see and feel the difference. When they are much more engaging and interactive, passengers will pay better attention, and they will have a more enjoyable experience. Overall, in my over 50 flights and numerous experiences with Spirit, their reception and love for the guest has been lacking (never forgetting some employees have gone above and beyond).

Score of 3/10

Total Score 44 /100

Grade: F