

What's going on at Schiphol?

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In the past few weeks and months, we've been reporting on delays at major European airports. But one in particular has been making headlines more than any other – Amsterdam's **EHAM/Schiphol**.

Overcrowding and understaffing have been causing multi-hour queues to clear security, or collect baggage. In fact, things have gotten so bad that airport authorities previously closed roads and asked major carriers to cancel their flights there. And it looks like there is more to come.

But why Schiphol, and why now? There's more to it than simply the Northern Summer. Let's take a closer look at what's happening there.

The Perfect Storm

The trouble at Schiphol is a unique brew of delay-inducing ingredients, all happening at the same time:

- Industrial action
- Surging demand
- Staffing
- Weather

Strikes

On April 23, airport staff went on an unannounced strike which brought ops to a grinding halt for several hours. The airport became **overcrowded** with passengers unable to travel, and authorities scrambled to close road access to the airport before things got any worse.

The news is that this may be about to happen again. A major union of airport workers (FNV) has announced their intention to strike from June 1 over pay and conditions – the impact could last for several

days.



An unexpected strike in April brought Schiphol to a standstill, and another is on the horizon.

Crowds

It's good news for the industry, but not so much for airports struggling to play catch-up. EHAM/Schiphol is one of the busiest airports by pax numbers in Europe, based on the latest stats. It's streaks ahead of Frankfurt, Munich and even big hitter, Heathrow.

All those passengers are causing a log jam, and some aren't happy about it. On May 22, news broke that a threatening security situation developed at security by passengers stuck in forever-queues, when staff began to feel unsafe – some even walked off the job. Military police were called in to calm the situation down before processing resumed. Which brings us to the next issue – staff, or **lack thereof**.



Police have previously been called in when crowds at the airport began to get out of hand.

Getting more people

With Covid restrictions easing, passenger levels are steadily increasing, but staffing levels are lagging behind – it takes time to find and train new manpower. It is an emerging problem in a resurgent industry, with airports across the globe reporting similar problems. It seems that Schiphol is one of the worst affected.

Those Pesky Clouds

Talk about the straw that broke the camel's back, but the weather has also been playing a role. Or more specifically, clouds have been.

On May 24, Eurocontrol reported that low clouds were delaying inbound flights due to arrivals being regulated with holding or other delaying actions. Perhaps the only good news is that summer is just around the corner, and with it, better conditions for flying.

Outlook

With the crowds going nowhere, and strikes on the horizon, it seems things will get worse before they get better. While impacts on the ground may be bigger for scheduled operators, airborne delays affect everyone.

What are the alternatives?

The good news is that there are a couple of good options nearby which may keep you clear from the log jam.

EHRD/Rotterdam

It's only 24nm away, and about a fifty-minute drive to Amsterdam Central. It's the nearest international option with customs.

Handling:

- *Aviapartner* rtm.handling.ops@aviapartner.aero +31 10 238 27 00
- *Jet Aviation Rotterdam* rtmfbo@jetaviation.com +31 10 298 49 49

EHEH/Eindhoven

A little further afield at 56nm, about an hour and fifteen minutes on the road.

Handling:

- *Viggo Eindhoven Airport*: info@viggo.eu +31 40 258 11 58



Rotterdam and Eindhoven are two solid options to avoid busy Schiphol.

Stay updated

For major delays, the best place to stay informed is the Eurocontrol website here, which is updated around the clock.