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Spain's Iberia cancels 185 flights over pay strike

Madrid - Spanish airline Iberia said Tuesday it was cancelling another 185 flights because of a strike over pay by cabin crew. Trade unions representing stewards and stewardesses are staging four one-day stoppages in an attempt to win pay rises, whilst Iberia is trying to cut costs. A total of 368 flights were due to be cancelled on Tuesday and Wednesday, following the cancellation of 430 flights at the end of October.

The flights eliminated on Tuesday and Wednesday included 121 international ones, Iberia said. Twelve of them were long distance flights to destinations including New York, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires and Mexico.

The cancellations will affect 40,000 passengers. Iberia was offering them the possibility of changing their tickets or of getting their money back.

The flight cancellations did not affect the functioning of Madrid airport, the carrier said. The tourism professionals' association Exceltur criticized the strike as "irresponsible," saying it damaged Spanish tourism at a time when it was already being undermined by the economic crisis and by increasing competition by other Mediterranean destinations.

The number of foreign tourists visiting Spain has already declined by nearly 10 per cent in the first nine months of this year, Exceltur said