

What you need to know: Airline operations: Latin America

September 11, 2020

As demand declined and governments around the world restricted travel, airlines adjusted their operations and, in some cases, suspended all services. As restrictions ease, airlines are rebuilding their operations. This report summarizes what airlines in Latin America are doing and planning.

Full-service airlines

Airline	Action and plans
Aerolineas Argentinas	Airline resumed limited operations from September 1
Aeromexico	Most domestic routes resumed. Rebuilding international schedule
Avianca	Domestic services resumed on September 1, 2020, with international flights following later in the month
Copa Airlines	Resumed operations from August 15; planning to operate 10% of normal capacity in September
LATAM Airlines	Capacity cut by 95% in April. Gradually restoring flying in June and July. Most LATAM airlines have filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, but they can continue flying. LATAM Argentina closed down
TAME	Government owner has announced airline is to be liquidated

Aerolineas Argentinas

From March 17, Aerolineas Argentinas cancelled long-haul flights to Madrid, Rome, Miami and New York until April 10.¹ Since then it operated a series of special flights to bring home Argentine passengers stranded abroad.

Following a Government executive order mandating a period of isolation, Aerolineas Argentinas scaled back its domestic operation from March 20 until March 31.² It continued to provide basic connections.

On April 27, Argentina's National Civil Aviation Administration asked airlines to stop selling tickets for all domestic and international departures until September 1.³ The agency claimed the decree is aimed at preventing airlines from ticketing flights not approved by the Argentine authorities.⁴

From September 1, Aerolineas began the process of gradually resuming flights. During September it will serve the following routes:⁵

- Domestic: Buenos Aires-Resistencia, Buenos Aires-Ushuaia, Cordoba-Resistencia
- Europe: Buenos Aires-Madrid (with separate flights for Argentine and non-Argentine passengers)
- Latin America: Buenos Aires-Asuncion, Cancun, Lima, Santiago, São Paulo

¹ [Aerolineas Argentinas](#), March 11, 2020

² [Aerolineas Argentinas](#), March 20, 2020

³ [Breaking Travel News](#), April 28, 2020

⁴ [BBC](#), April 28, 2020

⁵ [Aerolineas Argentinas](#), Flights in September

- North America: Buenos Aires-Cancun, Miami, New York

Aeromexico

During August, Aeromexico plans to operate the following international routes from Mexico City:⁶

- Asia – Seoul (2 per week), Tokyo (2)
- Europe – Amsterdam (3), Madrid (7), Paris (4)
- Latin America and the Caribbean – Lima (3), Santo Domingo (3), São Paulo (4-5)
- North America – Chicago (7), Denver (2), Houston (7), Las Vegas (2), Los Angeles (14), Miami (6), Montreal (2), New York (14), Orlando (5), San Antonio (7), San Francisco (5), Toronto (2), Vancouver (2)

Latin American flights to Bogota, Buenos Aires, Guatemala City, Managua, San Jose, San Salvador, San Pedro Sula and Santiago are all suspended until the end of August. European services to Barcelona and London Heathrow are due to resume from September 1. North American services to Dallas are suspended until the end of September.

Transborder services from Guadalajara to Salt Lake City and San Francisco, from Leon to Detroit and from Queretaro to Detroit are suspended until the beginning of September. But the airline is flying from Guadalajara to Chicago (7), Los Angeles (7), Fresno (5) and Sacramento (5).

Aeromexico is also operating a reduced domestic schedule until August:

	Operating	Suspended
Mexico City	Aguascalientes, Campeche, Cancun, Chihuahua, Ciudad del Carmen, Ciudad Juarez, Ciudad Obregon, Culiacan, Durango, Guadalajara, Hermosillo, Huatulco, La Paz, Leon, Los Cabos, Los Mochis, Manzanillo, Mazatlan, Merida, Mexicali, Minatitlan, Monterrey, Nuevo Laredo, Oaxaca, Puerto Vallarta, Queretaro, Reynosa, San Luis Potosi, Tampico, Tapachula, Tijuana, Torreon, Tuxtla Gutierrez, Veracruz, Villahermosa, Zacatecas, Zihuatanejo	Acapulco, Morelia
Monterrey	Cancun, Chihuahua, Guadalajara, Hermosillo, Leon, Mexico City, Puebla, Queretaro, San Luis Potosi, Tijuana	
Guadalajara	Mexico City, Monterrey, Tijuana	

Aeromexico is increasing its operations by 20% in August, operating an extra 1,200 flights compared with July.⁷ The August schedule sees it resume international services from Mexico City to Denver, Las Vegas, Quito and San Francisco and increase frequencies on existing services to Miami, Paris and Sao Paulo.

⁶ [Aeromexico](#)

⁷ [Business Travel News](#), July 29, 2020

There will also be extra services on domestic flights from Mexico City to Cancun, Chihuahua, Culiacan, Durango, Los Mochis and Merida.

Avianca

From March 23, Colombian airline Avianca suspended its international operations, largely in response to border closures around the world.⁸ It planned to resume normal service from May 1.

Avianca also planned to cut its domestic operation by 84%, with demand on these flights severely impacted by the loss of international connectivity. It intended to continue flights from Bogota to state capitals across the country and some regional destinations. With the Colombian government closing the country's airspace from March 25, Avianca suspended all domestic flights at least until April 12.

With little sign of the airline resuming services, Avianca warned in an SEC filing about its ability to continue as a going concern.⁹ The airline was allowed to restart domestic operations from September 1, the first stage in the gradual resumption of commercial air services.¹⁰ Avianca has already operated services from Bogota to Medellin.

Avianca's El Salvadorian operation will commence international services from September 19, flying from San Salvador to Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco and Washington DC. Avianca will restart other international routes from the city, where permitted. At the same time, the airline will also restart services from Nicaragua, flying from Managua to Miami.

Copa Airlines

Panamanian carrier Copa Airlines initially suspended all operations from March 23 through April 21. The suspension of all international flights by the Panama Civil Aviation Authority until May 22 forced Copa to extend its grounding.

Subject to approval from the authorities in destination countries, Copa had planned to phase in 12% of its June 2019 capacity from June 1. Its plans were frustrated, however, as Panama's government extended restrictions on international flights until June 21.

Copa will resume commercial operations gradually from September 4.¹¹ However, on August 14 it was able to relaunch services for Panamanian nationals and transit passengers from Panama City to San Jose, Costa Rica; Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; Quite and Guayaquil in Ecuador, and a weekly flight to New York, which will be increased to twice-weekly by the end of August.¹² The airline plans to work with governments across the region to expand its network. By September, it aims to operate 10% of 2019 capacity, rising to 30-40% by the end of the year.

LATAM

On March 12, LATAM Airlines cut its international flights by 30% for April and May, but it planned no change to its domestic operations. By March 16, in light of the spread of COVID-19, it decided to reduce overall capacity by 70%, comprising a 90% cut to international operations and a 40% reduction in

⁸ Avianca, March 19, 2020

⁹ [Finance Colombia](#), April 27, 2020

¹⁰ [Simpleflying](#), August 11, 2020

¹¹ [Copa Airlines](#), Where are we flying

¹² [Business Travel News](#), August 17, 2020

domestic services.¹³ By the beginning of April, border closures and reduced demand had convinced LATAM to cut overall capacity by 95% in April.¹⁴

LATAM continued flights to 39 destinations in Brazil, but with reduced frequencies. These flights connect to LATAM's hubs at Sao Paulo (Guarulhos and Congonhas airports), Brasilia and Fortaleza. It also maintained limited services to 13 of its 16 Chilean destinations, with flights fully suspended to Rapa Nui, Castro and Osorno.

LATAM also operated limited international flights from Sao Paulo to Miami and New York, and from Santiago to Sao Paulo, Miami and Los Angeles. It suspended all European flights for April.

Government restrictions forced LATAM to ground the operations of its affiliates in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

LATAM Airlines will gradually increase its domestic and international operations during June and July.¹⁵ As it resumes operations, LATAM will offer more flexible options, lower fares and increased sanitation measures.

During June, LATAM will operate international routes from Sao Paulo to Frankfurt, London, Madrid and Miami and from Santiago to Miami and Sao Paulo. By July, it intends to grow its international network to 13 destinations. In the second half of July, LATAM will reactivate services from Sao Paulo to Lisbon and from Santiago to Madrid.¹⁶

Within Brazil, LATAM will operate 74 domestic routes, while its Chilean operation will serve 12 domestic destinations, including La Serena, Copiapo, Temuco and Easter Island.

LATAM affiliates in Ecuador and Peru aim to resume domestic services in June, with its Colombian operation is aiming for a July restart.

On May 25, LATAM Group, including affiliates in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru (but excluding those incorporated in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay), filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the U.S., to enable it to reorganize in the wake of the pandemic.¹⁷ LATAM can now resize its business to the new demand environment. The airline group can continue flying during this process.

In response to the COVID-19 situation, LATAM has decided to effectively close down LATAM Argentina, announcing the end of domestic service covering 12 destinations: Bueno Buenos Aires, Iguazú, Bariloche, Salta, Tucumán, Mendoza, Córdoba, Neuquén, Comodoro Rivadavia, Río Gallegos, El Calafate and Ushuaia.

During September, LATAM Airlines will operate the following international routes:¹⁸

- Santiago – Los Angeles, Madrid, Miami, Montevideo, New York, Sao Paulo
- Sao Paulo – Frankfurt, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Montevideo, Miami, New York, Santiago

It will also operate the following domestic services:

¹³ [LATAM Airlines](#), Investor Relations, March 16, 2020

¹⁴ [Breaking Travel News](#), April 3, 2020

¹⁵ [Breaking Travel News](#), May 22, 2020

¹⁶ [NexNews](#), June 16, 2020

¹⁷ [Breaking Travel News](#), May 26, 2020

¹⁸ LATAM Airlines, August 31, 2020

- Brazil – comprehensive network from Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia¹⁹
- Chile: Santiago-Antofagasta, Arica, Calama, Concepcion, Copiapo, Iquique, La Serena, Puerto Montt, Punta Arenas, Temuco; Puerto Montt-Balmaceda, Punta Arenas
- Colombia: Bogota-Barranquilla, Bucaramanga, Cali, Cartagena, Leticia, Medellin, San Andres, Santa Marta
- Ecuador: Quito-Cuenca, Coca, Guayaquil, Manta; Guayaquil-Balta, Quito, San Cristobal
- Peru: Lima- Arequipa, Chiclayo, Iquitos, Jauja, Pucalpa, Piura, Talara, Tarapoto, Tumbes, Trujillo

TAME

At the end of May, Ecuador’s government decided to close and liquidate a number of public companies, including state-owned airline TAME, which had held a 34% share of the domestic market. The timing of the airline’s liquidation is not confirmed; the airline has entered an assessment phase which may last between four and six months.

Low-cost carriers

Airline	Action and plans
Azul	Rebuilding domestic schedule, with 65% of normal capacity scheduled for October
GOL	Ramping up domestic capacity to 50% of its 2019 level in September
Interjet	Operating just five domestic routes during April. International flights suspended from March 24
SKY Airlines	All operations suspended from March 25 until April 30
Viva Aerobus	Capacity back at 60% of normal level in August
Viva Air Colombia	Resumed limited domestic operations from September 1, 2020
Volaris	May capacity cut by 88%; June by 65% and July by 50%

Azul

Brazilian airline Azul cut its planned capacity by 90% through April 30. From March 25, it scaled back its operation to 70 non-stop flights per day to 25 destinations. It suspended all international flights except those departing from Viracopos International Airport near Campinas, where it operated 12 weekly flights to Lisbon and three to Porto.

Azul operated just 70 daily flights in April, rising to 115 in May. It added 53 more daily flights to its June schedule, but capacity was still 80% lower year-over-year. Azul is also rebuilding its network, increasing the number of domestic destinations served from 25 in April through 38 in May to 57 in June.

During August, Azul was due to operate 407 flights per day linking a network of 88 destinations. The airline estimates that total capacity in October will be 45% lower than in 2019. This is an improvement on the 58% reduction expected for September. During October, Azul expects to peak at 505 daily departures to 89 destinations.

¹⁹ [LATAM Airlines](#), August 31, 2020

GOL

On March 17, Brazilian carrier GOL cut international capacity by 90-95% and domestic by 50-60%. It typically serves 18 international and 79 domestic destinations. On March 24, GOL suspended all international services and cut domestic capacity by 92%. These changes applied through early May.

GOL typically operates 800 domestic flights per day. This fell to 50 during April and 70 in May. During June, this increased to 120, rising further to 200 flights per day during July. By August, GOL expected to resume operations across 90% of its network. Depending on how the COVID-19 situation develops, the airline believes it could be operating between 600-650 and 700-750 flights a day in December.

An easing of travel restrictions that have prompted higher sales encouraged GOL to ramp up its domestic capacity. During September, it plans to operate 50% of its 2019 capacity, ramping up domestic flights to 300 per day.

Interjet

Low-cost carrier Interjet suspended all international flights from March 24. For the month of April, it scaled back its domestic operation to just five routes: Mexico City-Cancun (4 daily flights); Mexico City-Guadalajara (3 daily flights); Mexico City-Monterrey (3 daily flights); Mexico City-Tijuana (twice-weekly) and Mexico City-Merida (twice-weekly). The airline has yet to reveal its schedule for May.

SKY Airline

Chilean carrier SKY Airline suspended all operations from March 25 until April 30 due to a significant slump in demand as governments throughout South America implemented travel restrictions.²⁰

The airline had earlier halved international capacity and reduced domestic operations in Chile to a minimum. SKY Airline decided to suspend these remaining services after the government placed Chile into lockdown, urging citizens to stay at home and barring foreigners from entering the country.

Viva Aerobus

Mexican low-cost carrier Viva Aerobus operated 60% of its normal capacity in August, having reactivated almost 80 routes.

Viva Air Colombia

From September 1, 2020, Viva Air Colombia was allowed to resume domestic services, restarting operations in Bogota, Barranquilla, Cali, Cartagena, Medellin and Santa Marta. It also plans to resume flights from Bogota to Monteria and from Cartagena to the island of San Andres. On the latter route, passengers will need to present a negative COVID-19 test.

During September, Viva Air Colombia plans to operate 30% of its normal schedule, hopefully at a 60% load factor.

Volaris

Low-cost carrier Volaris initially cut capacity by 50% from the last week of March. With the Mexican government's March 31 announcement of a month-long health emergency, Volaris raised its April capacity cuts to 82%. During May it operated just 12% of normal capacity, rising to 41% in June.

²⁰ [Airline Geeks](#), March 24, 2020

With demand increasing, Volaris planned to operate 50% of normal capacity in July. This would include new routes from Mexico City to Ciudad del Carmen, Torreon and Villerhermosa, with flights to Campeche and Tampico launched in October.

Volaris expects to operate 75% of normal capacity during September.

Note

The COVID-19 situation is rapidly evolving, and the situation is changing on almost an hourly basis. The information presented in this report represents the latest view as at September 11, 2020. We have carefully researched and checked the information contained. However, we do not guarantee or warrant the correctness, completeness or topicality of this article and do not accept any liability for any damage or loss as a result of the use of the information contained within this article.

Do you have questions or comments regarding this report? Please email mike.eggleson@bcdtravel.co.uk to share your thoughts.