

## What you need to know: Airline operations: North America

October 23, 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 North America are doing and planning.

### Canada

Airline	Action and plans
Air Canada	Q2 2020 capacity cut by 50%. International destinations cut to six during April. Flights to U.S. gradually resuming from May 22. Further suspensions mean July capacity will be 80% lower
Air Transat	European flights resumed in July
Harbour Air	All scheduled flights suspended until May 4
Porter Airlines	All operations suspended from March 20 until December 15
WestJet	Starting to rebuild domestic and international network in July and August

#### Air Canada

Air Canada reduced total capacity by 50% during the second quarter of 2020. It cut April capacity by 90% year-over-year.

The airline reduced its domestic network from 62 airports to 40 through April, but it aimed to continue serving all of the country's provinces and territories.

Air Canada gradually suspended most international flights by the end of March, while maintaining a few routes to help Canadian citizens return home. These "air bridges" operated between one or more of Air Canada's Canadian hubs and London, Paris, Frankfurt, Delhi, Tokyo and Hong Kong from April 1 until at least April 30. Its international network contracted from 101 airports to just six.

By April 1, Air Canada aimed to reduce its transborder network to the U.S. from 53 airports to 13. On April 21, following an agreement between the U.S. and Canadian governments to extend border restrictions already in place, Air Canada announced the suspension of all flights to the U.S. between April 26 and May 22.<sup>1</sup> It then resumed U.S. service, initially with flights to six destinations: New York LaGuardia, Washington Dulles, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston and Chicago. Air Canada plans to resume more U.S. services from June 22, subject to regulatory changes and demand.<sup>2</sup>

During June, Air Canada will also operate international services from Toronto to Frankfurt, London, Zurich, Tokyo and Tel Aviv; from Montreal to Frankfurt, London, Paris and Brussels; and from Vancouver to London, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul. By early July, Air Canada plans to add more internationals

<sup>1</sup> Cirium, April 21, 2020

<sup>2</sup> [Air Canada](#), May 22, 2020

services including Montreal to Athens, Rome and Geneva; Toronto to Munich, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Rome and Athens; Calgary to Frankfurt; and, subject to government approval, Vancouver to Shanghai.

To reduce daily cash burn amid ongoing weak demand for both business and leisure travel, and to adapt to government travel restrictions, Air Canada suspended 30 domestic routes during July. As a result, its capacity for the month will be 80% lower year-over-year. Most of the affected routes are in Newfoundland and Labrador, including the suspension of two departures each from Fredericton, Gander, Wabush and Deer Lake. Elsewhere there will be route suspensions from Baie Comeau, Gaspe and Regina.

### Air Transat

Air Transat gradually suspended its flights to Europe, initially until the end of April.<sup>3</sup> The airline resumed transatlantic services on July 24, operating three-times weekly services from Toronto to London Gatwick.<sup>4</sup> Within days, it also resumed services from Toronto to Manchester (twice weekly) and Glasgow (weekly).

### Harbour Air

British Columbia-based commuter airline Harbour Air ceased all scheduled flights from March 27. It does not expect to resume services until May 4. It will continue charter flying.

### Porter Airlines

Toronto-based regional airline Porter Airlines suspended all flights from March 20, 2020. It had originally planned to resume operations from June 1.<sup>5</sup> The airline was still grounded at the end of June, when it announced that flights would continue to be suspended until August 31 due to government travel restrictions in Canada and the U.S.

On August 4, Porter postponed its return-to-service further until October 7 amid ongoing domestic travel restrictions and the closure of the Canada-U.S. border.

On September 8, Porter once again pushed back the date of its restart, citing the latest extension of quarantine restrictions for travel to/from Canada and the closed Canada-U.S. border for its decision to delay its relaunch until November 12. Porter has since yet again pushed back the resumption of services; this time to December 15, 2020.

### WestJet

WestJet Airlines initially suspended all international and transborder flights (to Mexico and the U.S.) from March 23 for 30 days.<sup>6</sup> It also reduced its domestic flight schedule by 50% over the same period.

WestJet's capacity was down 91% year-over-year (YoY) in June. In July and August, WestJet increased frequencies and started to rebuild its network to 39 destinations in Canada, five in the U.S. and one in Mexico. Capacity in July would still be down 76% YoY.

From July 5, WestJet restarted transborder services to Los Angeles from Calgary and Vancouver, to Las Vegas from Calgary, Toronto and Vancouver, and from Toronto to New York LaGuardia and Orlando. It

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<sup>3</sup> [Breaking Travel News](#), March, 19, 2020

<sup>4</sup> [Breaking Travel News](#), July 23, 2020

<sup>5</sup> [Toronto CTV News](#), March 18, 2020

<sup>6</sup> [CTV News](#), March 17, 2020

also began a weekly Toronto-Cancun service from July 11. It also increased domestic services to destinations including Charlottetown, Kelowna, Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Yellowknife.

WestJet’s August capacity was 11% higher than July, but it was still down 75% YoY. Due to continued border closures and provincial travel restrictions, the airline has reduced frequency or temporarily suspended some domestic routes, including services to Halifax from Edmonton, Vancouver and Winnipeg, although it will maintain services to the city from Calgary, Ottawa and Toronto.

While WestJet will continue transborder services to Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Orlando, Atlanta and New York LaGuardia, it will lower frequency to Los Angeles and Atlanta.

From August 20, WestJet resumed transatlantic services from Calgary to Paris and London Gatwick.

Through September 4, WestJet served 39 domestic and nine international destinations.

From October 4, WestJet started its seasonal network, flying to 39 destinations within Canada. It is also serving a small number of international routes:

- U.S.: Calgary to Palm Springs and Phoenix
- Mexico: Calgary to Cabo San Lucas, Cancun and Puerto Vallarta, and Toronto-Cancun
- Jamaica: Toronto to Kingston and Montego Bay
- U.K.: Toronto to London Gatwick

During October 2020, WestJet will operate just 25% of the network it offered in 2019. Regional subsidiary WestJet Encore will fly 32% of its October 2019 network. From November 2, WestJet will suspend routes and reduce frequencies in East Canada, halting service from Moncton, Fredericton, Sydney and Charlottetown. Flights to Halifax from Toronto, Calgary and St. John’s continue, but with reduced frequencies.

## Mexico

Airline	Action and plans
Aeromexico	Most domestic routes resumed. Rebuilding international schedule
Interjet	Operating just five domestic routes during April. International flights suspended from March 24
Viva Aerobus	Capacity back at 60% of normal level in August
Volaris	May capacity cut by 88%; June by 65% and July by 50%

### Aeromexico

During August, Aeromexico plans to operate the following international routes from Mexico City:<sup>7</sup>

- 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)

<sup>7</sup> [Aeromexico](#)

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 also operated a reduced domestic schedule until August 2020:

	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 increased its operations by 20% in August, operating an extra 1,200 flights compared with July.<sup>8</sup> The August schedule saw 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. There were also extra services on domestic flights from Mexico City to Cancun, Chihuahua, Culiacan, Durango, Los Mochis and Merida.

### 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.

<sup>8</sup> [Business Travel News](#), July 29, 2020

### Viva Aerobus

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

### Volaris

Low-cost carrier Volaris initially cut capacity by 50% from the last week of March, intending to continue the cuts through April. With the Mexican government’s March 31 announcement of a month-long health emergency, Volaris raised its April capacity cuts to 80%. During May it operated just 12% of normal capacity, rising to 35% in June.

As demand increases, 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.

### U.S.

Airline	Action and plans
Alaska Airlines	80% capacity cut for April-May
Allegiant	30-35% cut in capacity in April and May. Service suspended at 10 airports until June 30
American Airlines	Planning to operate 55% of domestic and 20% of international schedule in July. Transatlantic routes resuming in June, July and October
Delta Air Lines	Domestic capacity cut by 80% and international by 90% in Q2 2020. More flights to Central America and the Caribbean resuming in the second half of June
Frontier Airlines	Operating 60% of 2019 capacity in July
Hawaiian Airlines	Some interisland and U.S. mainland routes maintained. International services may resume at the end of July
JetBlue	April and May capacity cut of at least 40%. Adding back flights during June
Southwest Airlines	Capacity running between 30-50% below 2019 levels
Spirit Airlines	July capacity will be only 16% lower year-over-year
United Airlines	Ramping up domestic services and resuming flights to Canada and Asia in July

### Alaska Airlines

Alaska Air Group, parent company of Alaska Airlines and Horizon Air, initially reduced its April capacity by 10%, rising to 15% in May. It promised to monitor demand and reduce capacity on a rolling 15-day basis as needed. By March 26, with demand down by more than 80%, Alaska Airlines deepened its capacity reduction to 70% for both April and May.<sup>9</sup> By April 6, the airline amended the figure to 80% for both months. Adjustments to the June schedule will depend on demand, but the airline expects substantial capacity cuts to continue for some months.

As it restores capacity, Alaska Airlines is already planning to launch seven new routes to develop its operations at Los Angeles, as it prepared to join the oneworld alliance in 2021.<sup>10</sup> Double daily services to

<sup>9</sup> [Business Travel News](#), March 26, 2020

<sup>10</sup> [Business Travel News](#), July 16, 2020

Los Angeles from Fresno begin on September 1. From October 1, it will start new daily services from Medford and Eugene in Oregon. These will be followed on November 20 by daily services from Tampa and Bozeman and four weekly flights from Fort Myers. In December, the airline will fly to Los Angeles from Kona and Lihue in Hawaii.

### Allegiant Air

Las Vegas-based leisure carrier Allegiant Air increased capacity cuts planned for April and May from 15% to 30-35% as travel declined. Ending 2019 with \$1.4 billion in debt and \$473 million in cash, Allegiant is considered to be under more pressure than some other airlines to reduce costs.<sup>11</sup>

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) will allow Allegiant to suspend service to eight airports until the end of September: Dayton, Grand Forks, Ogdensburg, Rochester, St. Cloud, Tucson, Raleigh-Durham and Moline Quad Cities. It can also suspend service at Bellingham and McAllen-Mission until the end of June.

### American Airlines

American Airlines suspended 60% of its capacity in April, increasing to up to 80% in May.<sup>12</sup> The airline initially planned for domestic capacity to be 20% lower in April and 30% lower in May. It increased these figures to 60-70% for April and 70-80% for May. The FAA's decision to grant additional flexibility in slot-use policies at U.S. airports is one factor behind the sudden sharp increase in domestic capacity cuts.

As part of its domestic cuts, American suspended all flights to Kona, Lihue and Maui in Hawaii in response to a 14-day quarantine order for travelers flying to the state. The airline continued to operate one daily flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu.

American also reduced international capacity by 80-90% in both April and May. During this time, it planned to operate a single daily flight each from Dallas and Miami to London Heathrow, as well as three flights per week from Dallas Fort Worth to Tokyo. American suspended most flights from New York JFK, Miami and Dallas to cities across South America.

American may suspend more than 60% of international capacity this summer.<sup>13</sup> This includes an 80% reduction in Pacific capacity, 65% on Transatlantic services and a 48% cut to Latin America.

Previously announced new services from Philadelphia to Casablanca, Chicago to Krakow, and Seattle to Bangalore will be delayed to 2021. The launch of new winter seasonal flights from Los Angeles to Christchurch and from Dallas Fort Worth to Auckland have been put back a year to October 2021. Start dates for other routes to Asia and Europe will also be delayed.

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<sup>11</sup> Cirium, March 19, 2020

<sup>12</sup> [American Airlines](#), March 27, 2020

<sup>13</sup> [American Airlines](#), April 2, 2020

American Airlines announced plans for the resumption of a number of European routes:

	CLT	ORD	DFW	JFK	MIA	PHL	BOS	LAX	PHX	RDU
Amsterdam			June 4			Oct 7				
Athens		June 4								
Barcelona		July 7		Oct 25	Oct 25					
Dublin		June 4	July 7			Oct 7				
Frankfurt	Oct 25		June 4							
London	July 7	June 4	Flying	June 4	Flying	June 4	Oct 25	June 4	Oct 7	June 4
Madrid				July 7	July 7	July 7				
Manchester						Oct 25				
Milan				Oct 25	Oct 25					
Munich	July 7									
Paris				July 7	Oct 25	Oct 25				
Rome						Oct 25				
Zurich						July 7				

American planned to expand its Latin American operation, resuming services to Brazil, Chile and Peru from August 5.

By the last week of May, American was carrying on average 110,000 passengers per day – up 71% on the 32,000 it had carried per day during April. In response to this improving demand, American is now planning to fly 55% of its domestic schedule and nearly 20% of its international schedule in July. Systemwide, this amounts to 40% of its July 2019 flying.<sup>14</sup>

Looking further into the future, American expects long-haul international capacity to be down 25% in summer 2021 compared to 2019.<sup>15</sup> The airline is planning a smaller international network in response to lower demand and to improve long-term profitability. American will exit three transatlantic routes from both Charlotte and Philadelphia, as well as five underperforming routes from Los Angeles to destinations in Asia and South America.

As American resets its international network for future growth, Dallas will become its main transpacific hub, Miami will remain its main hub for the Caribbean and Latin America, and Philadelphia will be its primary hub for service to Europe.

With the September 30 expiration of the U.S. CARES Act ending the requirement for airlines to continue serving any point served before March 1, American Airlines will remove 15 domestic destinations from its schedule. The suspensions will initially run from October 7 until November 3 and affects the following destinations: Del Rio, Texas; Dubuque, Iowa; Florence, South Carolina; Greenville, North Carolina; Huntington, West Virginia; Joplin, Missouri; Kalamazoo/Battle Creek, Michigan; Lake Charles, Louisiana; New Haven, Connecticut; New Windsor, New York; Roswell, New Mexico; Sioux City, Iowa; Springfield, Illinois; Stillwater, Oklahoma; and Williamsport, Pennsylvania. The decision will be reviewed, should there be an extension of the Payroll Support Program

<sup>14</sup> [Breaking Travel News](#), June 5, 2020

<sup>15</sup> [Breaking Travel News](#), July 1, 2020

## Delta Air Lines

Delta has cut its second quarter schedule by 85% year-over-year (80% domestic, 90% international). While it sharply curtailed international flying, it has resumed some services, with more following in the second half of June.<sup>16</sup>

- Delta now operates transatlantic services from Atlanta to Amsterdam, Frankfurt, London Heathrow and Paris Charles de Gaulle. It also flies from Detroit to Amsterdam and London, and from New York JFK to Amsterdam, Paris and Tel Aviv.
- Subject to foreign government approval, Delta plans to restore links to Africa with the resumption of services from Atlanta to Lagos, Nigeria.
- In Asia Pacific, Delta flies from Detroit and Seattle to Seoul, and it plans to add a Shanghai leg to both routes in the second half of June. Delta also operates less than daily services between Seattle and Tokyo Haneda. The resumption of Shanghai services is subject to government approval, and flights may be limited to one per week.
- Delta's Caribbean operation currently comprises flights from Atlanta to San Juan, St. Croix and St. Thomas, and from New York JFK to San Juan. In the second half of June, Delta will restart services from Atlanta to Aruba, Bonaire, Kingston, Montego Bay, Providenciales and St. Maarten.
- Transborder operations to Mexico comprise daily services to Mexico City from Atlanta and less than daily service from Detroit and Salt Lake City. Low frequency service from Atlanta to Cancun and from Los Angeles to Los Cabos and Puerto Vallarta restarts in the second half of June.
- Delta had planned to return to Central America in the second half of May, but it has now delayed the start of low frequency services from Atlanta to Panama City, San Pedro Sula and San Salvador until the second half of June.
- Flights to Canada operate under a reduced schedule of daily services from Detroit to Montreal and Toronto, from Minneapolis to Calgary and Winnipeg, between New York and Toronto and Seattle and Vancouver. Delta also operates lower frequency services from Detroit to Ottawa and from Minneapolis to Edmonton.

Delta continued to provide domestic flights to all U.S. hubs and top markets, but with significantly reduced frequency. Per the requirements of the U.S. government's COVID-19 relief stimulus package, airlines must keep minimum service levels to be eligible for grants.<sup>17</sup> Delta had sought permission to suspend service from none smaller airports: Lansing, Grand Rapids and Flint, Mich.; Worcester, Mass.; Hilton Head, S.C.; Pocatello, Idaho; Brunswick, Ga.; and Melbourne, Fla.

On May 13, Delta suspended service at 10 U.S. airports, as it consolidated operations in major markets until the end of September.<sup>18</sup> The suspended airports comprised:

- Chicago Midway – Chicago operations consolidated to O'Hare
- Oakland – service consolidated to San Francisco
- Hollywood Burbank and Long Beach airports – service consolidated to Los Angeles
- T.F. Green and Manchester Boston Regional – service consolidated to Boston Logan
- Westchester County – service consolidated to New York LaGuardia airport
- Stewart – service consolidated to New York JFK airport
- Akron-Canton – service consolidated to Cleveland

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<sup>16</sup> [Delta](#), May 29, 2020

<sup>17</sup> [Business Travel News](#), April 29, 2020

<sup>18</sup> [Business Travel News](#), May 8, 2020



- Newport News/Williamsburg – service consolidated to Norfolk

During June, Delta will add more flights to its domestic schedule, primarily in Atlanta and New York, and between hubs. It will add back more capacity during July, but domestic capacity will still be 65% below last year's level, while international capacity will be 75% lower.<sup>19</sup> Additional domestic flying will focus on Delta's hubs in Atlanta, Detroit, Minneapolis and Salt Lake City.

Capacity to Latin America and the Caribbean will be increased from 10% to 25% of usual capacity. This will include the restart of service between Atlanta and Sao Paulo. Subject to the lifting of travel restrictions, Delta plans to resume a number of transatlantic services, including New York to Athens, Lisbon and Accra, Detroit-Paris, from Boston and Seattle to Amsterdam, and between Atlanta and Lagos.

While its transpacific service will remain significantly reduced in July, Delta will resume flights from Atlanta to Seoul and from Los Angeles to Sydney. The airline will also return to China on June 25, when it starts a twice weekly Seattle-Seoul-Shanghai service. In July, frequency will drop to once-weekly, allowing Delta to add a weekly Detroit-Seoul-Shanghai service.

### Frontier Airlines

During May, Frontier reduced its capacity by 80% year-over-year.

Under the terms of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) rejected a request from the airline to suspend service to 33 destinations, including Sioux Falls, Cedar Rapids, El Paso, Grand Rapids and Syracuse. Because the cities were served by multiple airlines, the DOT did allow Frontier to stop operating routes to Charlotte, Detroit and Boston/Providence through June 10.

During July and August, Frontier resumed non-stop flights from Cincinnati (CVG) to Sarasota, Atlanta, Dallas and Miami. It had suspended the four routes in April. It also added frequencies on flights from CVG to Denver, Fort Myers, Las Vegas, Orlando and Tampa in anticipation of increased leisure traffic. There were also new routes from Newark to Palm Beach, Fort Myers and Myrtle Beach.

Capacity in July was still 40% lower year-over-year.

### Hawaiian Airlines

Hawaiian Airlines cut 40% of its flights in April 2020, including international routes and those to the rest of the U.S. It had already suspended flights to Auckland, Brisbane and Sydney due to travel restrictions. Flights to Tahiti, French Polynesia, ceased from March 21, for similar reasons.

After the state of Hawaii imposed a 14-day quarantine on arrivals, Hawaiian Airlines suspended its remaining international routes.<sup>20</sup> A weekly service to Tokyo Narita resumed in October, although service to Fukuoka, Osaka, Tokyo Haneda and Sapporo is suspended until the end of November 2020. Flights to Seoul, Pago Pago (American Samoa) and Tahiti (French Polynesia) will also not resume until December 2020 at the earliest. Hawaiian will not fly to Auckland, Brisbane or Sydney until the end of March 2021.

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<sup>19</sup> [Business Travel News](#), June 15, 2020

<sup>20</sup> [Hawaiian Airlines](#), April 2, 2020

Hawaiian has continued to operate a number of inter-island services, offering daily flights from Honolulu to Hilo, Kona, Lihue, Kahului, Molokai and Lanai. Daily services between Kahului and Lihue, Hilo and Kona resumed on July 15. All other routes were suspended through July 27.

Hawaiian has maintained daily flights to three points on the U.S. mainland: Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle. During July it resumed service to Portland, followed by Sacramento and San Diego.

With testing allowing travelers bypass quarantine, Hawaiian will in November 2020 resume mainland U.S. flights from Honolulu to Oakland, Phoenix and San Jose, with flights to Boston, Long Beach and New York following in December. At the same time, it will also resume flights from Lihue to Los Angeles and Oakland, and from Kahului to San Diego and San Francisco.

### JetBlue Airways

After a very tough few weeks of falling demand, JetBlue initially cut capacity by 40% in April and May.<sup>21</sup> The airline subsequently deepened these cuts to 80% for April. JetBlue's June capacity was down 79% year-over-year.

JetBlue's April schedule adjustment included big cuts to daily departures and consolidated operations at key hubs from April 15 until June 10:

- Boston – daily departures reduced from 180 to 28; flights consolidated at Boston Logan International, with all services from Providence T.F. Green International airport suspended.
- San Francisco - daily flights cut from 19 to two; flights operate only from San Francisco International with service from San Jose suspended.
- Washington area – daily flights reduced from 34 to five, operating only from Reagan National, with service from Baltimore/Washington suspended
- New York – daily flights cut from 215 to 30; flights only from JFK and Newark Liberty, with service suspended from LaGuardia, Westchester County and Stewart International airports.
- Los Angeles area – flights cut from 44 to five per daily, operated only from Los Angeles International, after flights suspended from Long Beach, Hollywood Burbank and Ontario airports.

JetBlue also planned to file with the U.S. Department of Transportation to suspend flying at airports where it operated only a handful of daily flights and where demand did not support JetBlue service.<sup>22</sup> At the end of April it submitted a request to suspend service at 16 airports, including Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Las Vegas, Philadelphia and Seattle.<sup>23</sup>

During July JetBlue resumed service to nine destinations previously suspended from its schedule: Ponce and Aguadilla in Puerto Rico, Chicago O'Hare, Dallas Fort Worth, Houston Intercontinental, Martha's Vineyard, Minneapolis St. Paul, Nantucket, Philadelphia, Portland International and Providence TF Green International.

JetBlue also added services from Newark to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Charleston, Jacksonville, Austin, San Diego, Las Vegas, Phoenix and Sarasota. It also introduced new flights from New York to Dallas, Detroit, Minneapolis, Fort Myers, Tampa and St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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<sup>21</sup> [JetBlue](#), March 18, 2020

<sup>22</sup> [JetBlue](#), April 8, 2020

<sup>23</sup> [Business Travel News](#), April 29, 2020

### Southwest Airlines

With a mostly domestic network, Southwest's business has been less affected than its competitors. But with cancellations outpacing bookings, it initially decided to lower capacity by 20% between April 14 and June 5. Most cuts will be in markets where Southwest has four or more non-stop flights. It also decided to suspend all international services until May 4.

On March 24, Southwest brought forward its capacity reductions, cancelling 1,500 of its 4,000 daily flights running from March 27 until April 14, when the next round of capacity cuts are set to begin.<sup>24</sup>

Southwest subsequently decided to deepen its capacity cuts to more than 40% from May 3 through June 5, and by 50% during June.<sup>25</sup> It then deepened these figures to 60-70% and 45-55% respectively. By May 18, improving demand meant bookings were once again exceeding cancellations.

Southwest intends to continue flying to all domestic destinations, maintaining nearly every city pair in its domestic schedule prior to the pandemic. Some journeys that had been non-stop may now require a technical stop or a connection. The airline continues to evaluate further reductions.

Southwest will continue its policy of keeping middle seats free at least until September 30, effectively reducing available capacity by one-third.<sup>26</sup> People traveling together who wish to use the middle seat are still allowed to do so.

Amid weaker-than-expected demand growth, Southwest scaled back its capacity plans. For July, capacity was 30% lower year-over-year (YoY); it had also planned for August to be 20% lower,<sup>27</sup> but the airline subsequently revised this down to 27%. Capacity in September is expected to be 40% lower YoY, with October in the 40-50% range.

### Spirit Airlines

Ultra-low-cost carrier Spirit Airlines operated just 50 daily flights in May, rising to 150 in June. The airline is now planning to operate 80% of its 2019 capacity in July, as it reintroduces flights. It aims to serve 63 of its 75 destinations, operating 550 daily flights.

Capacity was down 80% year-over-year in June; in July this will be reduced to 16%.

During June, Spirit resumed international services to Cancun and to Ecuador.

### United Airlines

United Airlines had aimed to cut its April schedule by 68%, including a 52% reduction in domestic services. By April 8, it had deepened the cuts to 78% and 67% respectively.

In the domestic segment it suspended all flights between the mainland and Hawaii except a daily San Francisco-Honolulu operation.<sup>28</sup> United also suspended mainland domestic routes from its hubs at Chicago O'Hare, Denver, Newark, Washington Dulles, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, but it cut all service to just two Californian markets: Mammoth Lakes and Stockton. The airline is monitoring demand and changes in curfews and restrictions and will adjust its schedule accordingly.

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<sup>24</sup> [Business Travel News](#), March 24, 2020

<sup>25</sup> [Southwest Airlines](#), March 31, 2020

<sup>26</sup> [Business Travel News](#), June 17, 2020

<sup>27</sup> [Southwest Airlines](#), Q2 2020 results

<sup>28</sup> [United Airlines](#), April 2, 2020

United cut its international schedule by 90% in April, continuing daily operations on just six routes:<sup>29</sup>

- Newark to Frankfurt, London and Tel Aviv
- Houston to Sao Paolo
- San Francisco to Tokyo Narita and Sydney

In the transborder market, United suspended all flying to Canada from April 1, but it maintained a small number of flights to Mexican destinations.

United also cut its scheduled capacity for May and June by 90% compared to its pre-pandemic plans. However, with cancellation and no-show rates lower than in April, and North American demand showing a modest improvement, United lowered its July capacity cut to 75%.

United planned to restore 150 flights to its domestic schedule in July. Services targeted leisure destinations in states that were faster to reopen and ease lockdowns. United operated more flights to leisure destinations in Florida, Las Vegas, Charleston, Portland (Maine), Aspen and Jackson Hole. It also increased flights to New York, Boston, Seattle and Philadelphia and resumed cross-border services to Calgary, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

During July, United will begin rebuilding its Asia Pacific schedule. From July 8, it will resume service between San Francisco and Shanghai with twice-weekly flights. During the month United will also start Chicago-Tokyo Haneda flights and resume service from the U.S. to Seoul, Hong Kong and Singapore (via Hong Kong). In September, the airline will resume Chicago-Hong Kong and Los Angeles-Sydney services.<sup>30</sup>

During August, United operated 48% of its domestic schedule, compared to 30% in July, and 25% of its international schedule, compared to 16% previously.<sup>31</sup> Domestic growth will focus largely on United's hubs in Chicago, Houston and Denver. United will also double its flights from Newark compared to July, with extra flights to leisure destinations including Aspen, Bangor, Bozeman and Jackson Hole. The airline will also add more flights to Hawaii, the Caribbean and Mexico, while its transatlantic schedule will include the restoration of services from Chicago to Brussels and Frankfurt, from San Francisco to London, and from Newark to Brussels, Munich and Zurich.

By September, United plans to be operating 30% of its pre-COVID019 international schedule. This will include the restart of destinations in the Caribbean and Latin America, including Cabo San Lucas, Puerto Vallarta, San Jose and Liberia. It will also add 40 daily flights to 48 domestic routes and will resume service to Hawaii with flights to Hilo and Kauai from the mainland.

Systemwide, United plans to operate 34% of the schedule it operated in September 2019. By October, this will rise to 40% of its prior year level. Domestic capacity will be 54% down year-over-year in October, with international capacity down 67%.

During October, United will resume or launch new domestic services on nearly 50 routes, including 37 routes from its Chicago, Denver and Houston hubs. It will also resume service to 14 international destinations, including Bogota, Buenos Aires, Lima and Panama City.

Even before it has fully restored its network, United has announced plans for a number of new long-haul routes. From December 2020, it will launch a Chicago-Delhi service, with San Francisco-Bangalore

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<sup>29</sup> [United Airlines](#), March 25, 2020

<sup>30</sup> [Business Travel News](#), July 7, 2020

<sup>31</sup> [Business Travel News](#), July 1, 2020

following in spring 2021. United will also three new African routes in 2021, linking Washington DC to both Accra and Lagos and Newark to Johannesburg. All five routes were already part of United's long-term network plan. It is also adding two new routes to Hawaii: Newark-Maui and Chicago-Kona.

#### 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 October 23, 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](mailto:mike.eggleson@bcdtravel.co.uk) to share your thoughts.