

## Cultural, Family, and Tourism Ties Strengthened as Contour Airlines Opens St. Thomas–Dominica Route

**The direct flights will benefit Dominica’s diaspora in St. Thomas, support the entertainment industry by simplifying artist bookings, and create vital links for families and travelers long burdened by exhausting multi-leg travel options.**

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Passengers board Contour Airlines from St. Thomas to Dominica for the first time on Wed. Sept. 24, 2025 as officials and travelers celebrate the launch of the new direct route. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

Wednesday marked a milestone in regional air travel with the launch of Contour Airlines’ inaugural flight connecting St. Thomas to Dominica’s Douglas-Charles Airport in Marigot. The

new service was celebrated at Cyril E. King Airport with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by officials and stakeholders, who underscored the significance of the direct route.

“This is truly a great occasion for us today,” said Acting Dominica Minister of Tourism, Cherika Lockhart Hypolite. She recalled her own difficult journey to reach St. Thomas via InterCaribbean, which required a flight to Tortola and a full day of waiting before taking a ferry. “With Contour Airlines' direct flight from St. Thomas to Dominica, Dominica to St. Thomas, I would not have waited that long, and I say it is a great day.”

V.I. Port Authority Executive Director Carlton Dowe, recognized for pushing forward key agreements for the territory, described the route as a long-awaited breakthrough. “For too long the people of this territory and our brothers and sisters from Dominica have waited. No more of having to go to San Juan [Puerto Rico], sit down and wait, catch a flight, probably stop in two other islands before you get to Dominica. No longer would you have to fly from here to go to Miami, then to go down to DA with family whether you're home for the festivals or because a loved one is sick. It takes all day sometimes; the person already buried and you ain't reach there yet.” He noted that such agreements succeed only with the full support of local governments and the commitment of partners like Contour Airlines.

Ian Turnbull, director of Festivals at the V.I. Department of Tourism, highlighted the potential benefits for both cultural exchange and entertainment. He noted that booking popular Dominican performers such as Asa Bantan and Triple Kay will be easier, while the large Dominican diaspora living in St. Thomas will also benefit from faster connections.

Dominican Bouyon star Asa Bantan, who is also an ambassador for Dominica, traveled to St. Thomas to promote the route. “There's nothing better than this right now,” he said. “No more stopping and hopping,” he added, praising the direct service.

Benjamin Munson, president of Contour Airlines, expressed enthusiasm on behalf of the company's 800 employees. He said the airline was proud to expand regional connectivity. “We're seeing an enormous interest in it,” Munson noted, explaining that the flight schedule was designed with convenience in mind, offering service on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays.

The route is served by a modified Embraer 145 aircraft. While typically configured for 50 passengers, Contour has adapted the plane to seat 30 travelers for the St. Thomas–Dominica connection. The flight time is about 45 minutes. A standard roundtrip ticket costs on average \$409, while one-way fares are around \$200, according to the Consortium's review of prices.