

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Jet Blue Lands In Cuba As Sea Change In U.S./Cuba Relations Continues

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The first scheduled passenger jet flights in history between Cuba and the United States began on Wednesday with a 9:45 a.m. flight from Florida to Santa Clara, east of Havana.

The flight, on Jetblue, was the first regularly scheduled flight from the United States to Cuba in more than 50 years. It represented another crucial step in the quest to normalized relations between the U.S. and Cuba, two former Cold War enemies, and promises to sharply reduce airfares and ease travel between the nations.

The scheduled service was also the latest [in a string of important changes](#) between the nations since President Barack Obama decided in 2014 to restore diplomatic relations

with the communist nation. Embassies were opened, direct mail service was restored and [Carnival Cruise Line ships have sailed to Cuba.](#)

Other moves, like ferry service and the building in Cuba of an American company's tractor assembly plant, were authorized by the Obama administration but stalled by the Cuban government.

"Today opens the door to further exchange between the American people and the Cuban people," Anthony Foxx, the United States transportation secretary, said in an interview. "We think that's ultimately good for the expansion of freedom and democracy."

Mr. Foxx was among the inaugural flight's 150 passengers, which included more than two dozen journalists and assorted dignitaries.

Cuba and the United States agreed to allow up to 90 daily round-trip flights between the two nations, the Department of Transportation said. Six airlines have been approved for flights to nine Cuban cities other than Havana, but not all of them have announced their schedules.

Mr. Foxx said far more airlines had expressed interest in flying to Havana, the capital, than could be accommodated.

"I haven't seen anything like it," he said.

On Wednesday, the Department of Transportation announced that Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Frontier Airlines, JetBlue, Southwest Airlines, Spirit Airlines and United Airlines would operate the coveted Havana flights. The airlines will fly from Atlanta; Charlotte, N.C.; Fort Lauderdale; Houston; Los Angeles; Miami; Newark; New York; Orlando, Fla.; and Tampa, Fla.

Source: The New York Times.