

United plans more Florida flights, but virus gets final say

August 13 2020, by David Koenig



United Airlines planes are parked at Orlando International Airport, in a Tuesday, April 7, 2020 file photo, in Orlando, Fla. United Airlines said Tuesday, July 21 that it lost \$1.63 billion in the second quarter as revenue plunged 87%, and it will operate at barely over one-third of capacity through September as the coronavirus throttles air travel. (Joe Burbank/Orlando Sentinel via AP, File)

United Airlines said Wednesday it plans to add up to 28 daily flights to Florida this winter, but the airline is prepared to reverse course if the

rate of coronavirus cases in the state remains high.

United said that it will increase flights from New York, Boston and Cleveland to four destinations in Florida, including Tampa and Orlando, starting in November, then gradually add other cities on both north and south ends.

"We will be keeping a very close eye on the cases and how the surge is taking one way versus the other to make changes," said Ankit Gupta, United's vice president of U.S. network planning. "We are going to remain flexible and adjust our capacity."

United's planned increase in Florida is a fraction of its overall schedule, but airlines are desperate to boost revenue, and they need more flights to do it. COVID-19 is making it hard for airlines to plan.

A few weeks ago, United had to scale back ambitious plans for growth in August after coronavirus cases spiked in much of the U.S., including Florida. After more than two months of slow growth, U.S. air travel leveled off in July.

Over the last seven days through Tuesday, the number of people screened at U.S. airport security checkpoints was down 72% from a year ago, according to government figures. Daily counts have ranged from 831,789—a five-month high—to 559,420.

"We have suspended our [crystal ball](#) around how demand is shaping up, since it's so volatile," Gupta said.

Before the pandemic, United typically set most of its final schedule about 120 days into the future. That is now down to 30 or 45 days.

What little demand airlines are seeing is mostly for leisure travel, not

business trips, and it is for domestic flying, not international—most countries are restricting Americans because of COVID-19. United's planned new winter flights to Florida, which will also depart from Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Indianapolis and Columbus, Ohio, are aimed at leisure travelers, Gupta said.

© 2020 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: United plans more Florida flights, but virus gets final say (2020, August 13) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2020-08-florida-flights-virus.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.