

Routes: Alaska, Southwest, Finnair, United, American, Air India, Avianca

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Alaska Airlines will start Mexico City nonstops from SFO and LAX in August. (Image: Alaska Airlines)

In international route developments, Alaska unveils plans for its new California-Mexico City flights; Southwest will add more international service from Ft. Lauderdale; Finnair is about to launch San Francisco flights; United schedules aircraft changes for some transpacific markets from SFO and launches more seasonal Europe service; American puts its code on new flights from the West Coast to Barcelona; Air India adds two U.S. gateways; and Avianca Brasil adds a U.S. route.

Alaska Airlines has won Transportation Department approval for Mexico City routes thanks to slots at MEX that Delta and joint venture partner Aeromexico had to give up, and now Alaska has **released schedule plans** for its new service. **On August 8, Alaska will start flying one daily roundtrip from both**

San Francisco and Los Angeles to Mexico City; on November 6, it will add a second daily LAX-MEX flight, plus one a day from San Diego to Mexico City. The SFO flight and the first LAX flight will use 737s; the second LAX flight and the San Diego service will use E175s.

Southwest Airlines is due to cut the ribbon in a couple of weeks on a new international concourse at its Ft. Lauderdale base, when it will also **add service** from FLL to new international destinations including Montego Bay, Cancun, Belize and Grand Cayman. Now Southwest has announced **two more international destinations** from Ft. Lauderdale. **In early November, it will begin daily flights from FLL to San Jose, Costa Rica and Punta Cana, Dominican Republic.** And on November 11, the carrier will also start Saturday-only service to Cancun from Nashville and St. Louis.



Finnair will use an A330 on its San Francisco route. (Image: Finnair)

June 1 is the launch date for seasonal Finnair service from San Francisco to Helsinki, operating three days a week through the end of September with an Airbus A330-300. Finnair is a member of the American/British Airways Oneworld alliance, and Alaska Airlines this week **announced a frequent flyer partnership** with Finnair as well. **“Members of Alaska Mileage Plan can begin earning miles on Finnair starting today,” the airline said.** “Award redemption will commence later this year. Finnair Plus members can begin earning and redeeming points on Alaska Airlines starting today.”

United Airlines is planning some equipment changes on transpacific routes from San Francisco this winter, according to Routesonline.com. **On August 1**, United will pull the 747-400 from its daily SFO-Taipei flight, replacing it with a 777-300ER. **Starting October 28**, one of United’s two daily SFO-Shanghai Pudong flights will use a three-class 777-200ER instead of the previously planned 787-9; the other will use a 787-9. On December 16, United will boost SFO-Auckland schedules from seven to 10 a week as previously

announced, but will use a 787-9 instead of a 787-8 for the winter season. And starting December 20, United's daily 787-9 service from SFO to Tokyo Haneda will switch to a 777-200ER.

Meanwhile, United on May 24 is due to kick off its next round of seasonal transatlantic service, including flights from Newark to Athens continuing through October 4; Washington Dulles to Barcelona through October 27; and **San Francisco to Munich through September 3.** On May 25, United adds Chicago O'Hare-Shannon service continuing through September 5, and Chicago-Edinburgh flights through October 4.



Level will fly A330s from Oakland and Los Angeles. (Image: IAG)

Remember that new low-fare service from the West Coast to Barcelona that we told you about in March on a carrier called Level? That's a new low-cost operation from International Airlines Group, the parent of British Airways and Iberia, and it's due to get off the ground next week, with **twice-weekly Los Angeles-Barcelona flights beginning June 1 and three flights a week from Oakland to Barcelona starting June 2,** both using two-class A330s. And now Routesonline.com reports that BA/Iberia's joint venture partner American Airlines **will put its AA code** onto the Level flights.



Air India's SFO-Delhi flight proving very popular (Image: Peter Biaggi)

Air India is said to be doing so well with its San Francisco-Delhi service that it plans to add two new U.S. gateways later this year, according to The Times of India. The carrier has already announced plans to start flying to Washington Dulles in July, and the newspaper said Air India now expects to begin non-stop **Los Angeles-Delhi** service September 1, followed by Dallas/Ft. Worth service sometime later this year. **The report said Air India is seeing a surge in passenger demand for U.S. service now that travelers cannot take their laptops into the cabins of the big Middle Eastern airlines on non-stop flights to the U.S.** Besides its SFO service, Air India also flies to Delhi from New York and Chicago, and to Mumbai from Newark.

Avianca Brasil is due to kick off new daily flights between **Miami and Sao Paulo** June 23, with red-eye service in both directions.

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