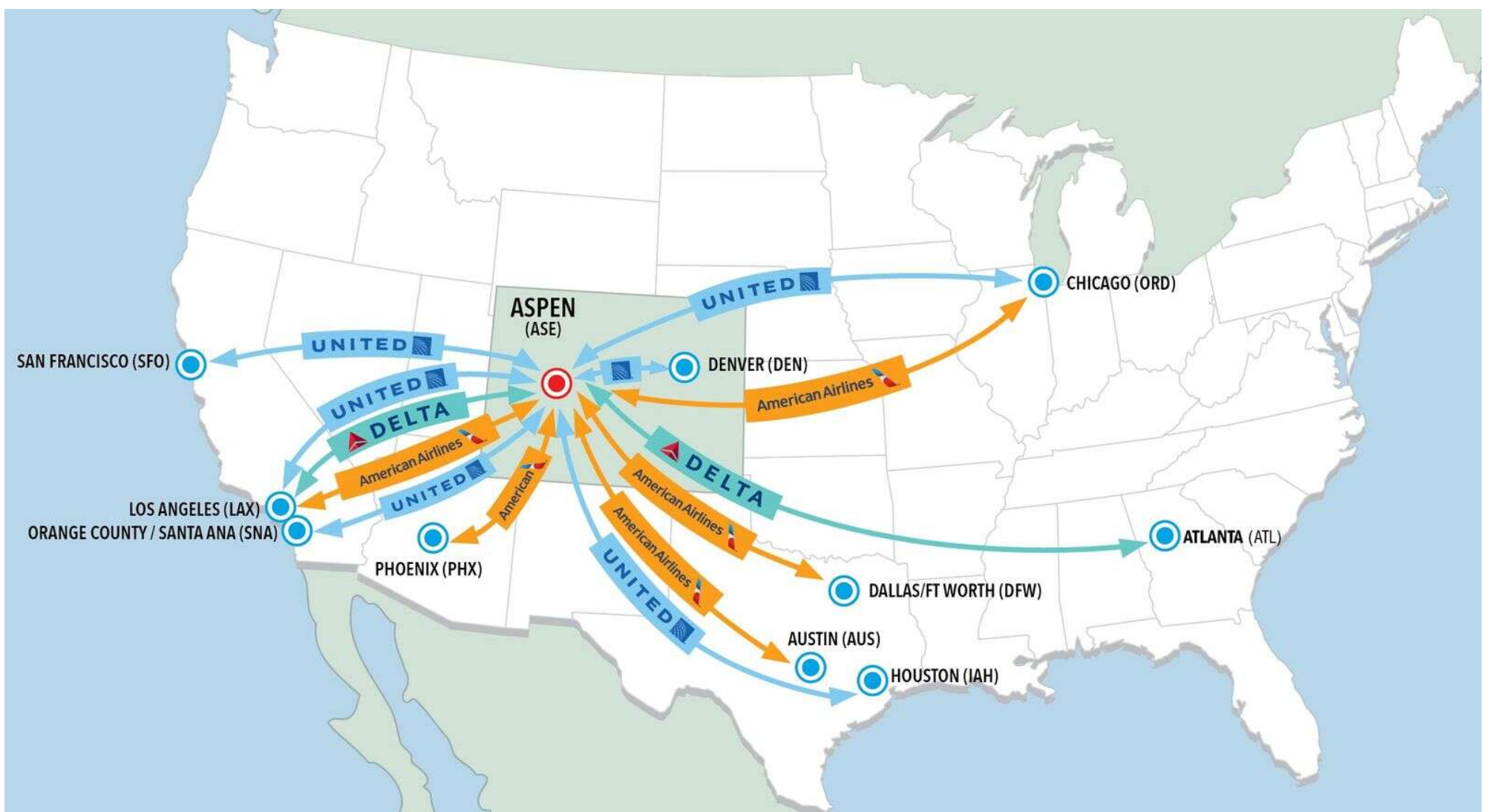


Aspen winter flight schedule includes up to 10 markets over holidays

News [FOLLOW NEWS](#) | August 27, 2021



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Graphic by Amber Moore/Aspen Skiing Co.

Nonstop commercial flights to Aspen-Pitkin County Airport from up to six airports between Texas and California are part of a schedule that is all but finalized for the upcoming winter ski season.

“I think this is a pretty solid plan,” said Bill Tomcich, a consultant to Fly Aspen Snowmass, which is an alliance among Aspen Skiing Co., Aspen-Pitkin County Airport, Aspen Chamber Resort Association and Snowmass Tourism.

On Friday, what Tomcich said is the final piece to the winter flight schedule came with the announcement of two daily direct flights between Santa Ana, California, and Aspen. United Airlines will offer the flights starting Dec. 16 and running through March 26. The incoming, nonstop flights to Aspen will originate from John Wayne Airport.

United Express will operate the flights — which on average take approximately 2 hours and 8 minutes — through SkyWest.

The announcement came on the heels of American Airlines’ June 5 debut of seasonal direct flights between Austin, Texas, and Aspen. That Saturday-only service began June 5 and ends Sept. 5. American’s direct flights between Aspen and Austin will return on a daily basis during the holiday season Dec. 16 through Jan. 3.

Other Texas markets that will serve Aspen nonstop this winter are Dallas/Forth Worth and Houston.

American will provide up to five flights daily between DFW and Aspen this winter, while United will offer four daily flights between Aspen and Houston.

The other California markets serving Aspen this winter are Los Angeles and San Francisco.

American will provide L.A.-Aspen flights twice daily, Delta Air Lines once, and United four times a day.

United will be the sole carrier providing service from San Francisco, twice a day this winter. Other exclusive service will come from Delta with one nonstop daily flight between Atlanta and Aspen, and American will offer a direct flight to and from Phoenix this winter.

Chicago nonstop flights will be offered up to five times a day by United and twice daily by American.

As usual, Denver International Airport will have the most flights to and from Aspen on the winter schedule, with eight daily arrivals and departures on the books. The L.A. service, offered by the three carriers serving Aspen, adds up to seven flights a day.

The commercial service is a return to pre-pandemic levels, and Tomcich said that's critical to tourism because of international flight restrictions to the U.S.

"The potential lack of international flights makes it more important that we make it easier for our domestic market," he said, noting the strength of Austin and Santa Ana markets.

"These two markets, Austin and Orange County, we've had an eye on them for a long time," he said.

Aspen had 188,883 commercial enplanements for all of 2020, in contrast to 308,143 in 2019, which equated a 40.33% drop, [according to Federal Aviation Administration data](#).

Private flights also have increased since the pandemic, and airport director Dan Bartholomew noted "it's gets a little tight at times."

"When we hit highs on the Fourth of July when we have drop-and-goes, which is when there's no room to park that aircraft, they usually end up dropping off the passengers and flying the aircraft to Centennial (Airport in Arapahoe)."

General aviation, however, has not disrupted commercial flight service this year.

"Nothing like that," he said.

As for this winter, he agreed with Tomcich about its potential.

"We're seeing a fairly robust schedule for the winter," Bartholomew said.

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