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overnight flights, the first being from Las Vegas and Hawaii.

Mar. 26, 2024



Credit: Stephen M. Keller, Southwest Airlines Co.

By Laurie Baratti, TravelPulse (via TNS).

For the first time in its 57-year history, Southwest Airlines is planning to operate overnight flights, the first being from Las Vegas and Hawaii.

While no formal date has been set for the launch of the late-night departures, Southwest's Chief Commercial Officer, Ryan Green, stated this week that the carrier

is aiming to start them in about two years.

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According to The Washington Post, Las Vegas' Harry Reid International Airport saw at least 26 overnight flights departing after 9 p.m. on nearly every U.S. airline that operates in Sin City on a random Thursday night this month. Such flights are typically more than four hours long and connect Las Vegas with major metropolises including Atlanta, Boston, New York and Washington, D.C.

While Southwest Airlines has built a reputation for its unique approach to air travel, including all-economy unassigned seating and complimentary checked bags, the introduction of red-eye flights represents a significant milestone in its evolution as an airline.

One thing Southwest is not known for is its technological prowess or being on the cutting edge of aviation operations. The massive Southwest holiday meltdown of 2022 was ultimately attributed to its antiquated IT infrastructure, which meant that disrupted flights had to be reassigned manually and the airline simply couldn't keep up with all the delays and cancellations caused by extreme winter weather conditions.

Prior to 2014, Southwest's reservations system was too limited to offer customers anything beyond daytime flights within the U.S. But, a decade ago, it adopted a more modern system from aviation IT provider Amadeus, which enabled it to start flying internationally. Overnight flights first became possible once the new platform was fully integrated in 2017, but the airline didn't begin offering flights with overnight connections until last July.

At the Routes Americas 2024 air travel conference in Bogota, Colombia, this week, Green disclosed that he believes there's a potential for Southwest to run approximately 50 red-eye flights per day. With operating costs up due to ongoing inflation and new labor agreements, Green said, "We have to be maniacally focused

on being efficient,” adding that Southwest aims to grow, but without “adding to the

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