
Silver gets Cuban OK for Fort Lauderdale-to-Santa Clara flights

31/08/2016



Silver Airways is the latest U.S. carrier to receive Cuban government approval to begin regularly scheduled flights between Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood and Santa Clara, Cuba.

The Fort Lauderdale-based carrier plans to launch its first flight on the route Thursday. It will come a day after JetBlue Airways makes history on the same route with the launch of the first commercial flight between the United States and Cuba in more than 50 years.

"We have received word from the Cuban government that Silver's service will begin Sept. 1, 2016," Silver spokeswoman Misty Pinson confirmed in an email Tuesday.

Silver's inaugural flight is scheduled to depart from Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport at 7:15 a.m. and arrive at Santa Clara's Abel Santamaría Airport at 8:56 a.m., according to its website.

In June, Silver was awarded rights from the U.S. Department of Transportation to fly from Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood to Santa Clara and either other Cuban cities, including Camagüey, Cienfuegos, Holguín, Santiago, Cayo Coco, Varadero, Cayo

Largo and Manzanillo.

Silver is advertising start dates for the eight other routes from Oct. 13 through Dec. 16 on its [website](#).

The regional carrier's introductory fares to Cuba start at \$98 one-way, but certain restrictions apply. The Cuba flights will operate with its signature 34-passenger Saab 340B Plus turbo-prop aircraft, according to Silver.

On Wednesday, JetBlue's inaugural flight from Fort Lauderdale to Santa Clara is scheduled to depart at 9:45 a.m., with several federal and local government dignitaries aboard to mark the historic trip.

American Airlines is expected to be the third carrier to begin regular commercial flights between the United States and Cuba when it launches service from Miami International Airport to Cienfuegos and Holguin on Sept. 7. It also plans to add flights from Miami to Camaguey and Santa Clara on Sept. 9 and to Varadero on Sept. 11, the airline has previously announced.

Southwest was also among the batch of six U.S. carriers approved by the DOT in June to start U.S routes to several Cuban cities, excluding Havana. The Dallas-based carrier plans to operate flights from Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood to Matanzas and Santa Clara, but it has not yet announced launch dates for these routes.

In July, the DOT also gave tentative approval to eight U.S. airlines to operate nonstop service between Havana and 10 cities including Fort Lauderdale and Miami.

In the initial round of approvals with impact on South Florida, JetBlue, Southwest and Spirit airlines would offer flights from Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International to Havana's Jose Marti International Airport. Meanwhile, American, Delta and Frontier would fly from Miami International Airport. The federal agency is expected to issue final approval on Havana routes later this summer.

Although Silver applied for rights to serve Havana from five Florida cities including Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach, it was not among the airlines granted the DOT's initial approval.
