
First Charter Flight Takes Off From LAX to Cuba

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The American Airlines flight departed at 12:30 p.m., following a ceremony attended by Mayor Eric Garcetti and officials with the airline and LAX.

Sounds of mambo music and smells of spicy ropa vieja permeated Terminal 4 at Los Angeles International Airport on Saturday, marking the inaugural charter flight from the West Coast to Havana.

USA law still bars most tourist travel to Cuba. Starting last December, President Obama began taking steps to advance the US effort to normalize relations with Cuba, following a 54-year frozen relationship that began when the former Cold War foes cut ties in 1961.

The airline also offered chocolate Cuban cigars on the flight. The airline expects to operate about 1,200 charter flights to Cuba this year. CTS now manages flights of American Airlines, JetBlue and XTRA Airways, from Los Angeles, Miami, New York and Tampa to Havana, Cienfuegos, Santa Clara, Camaguey, Holguin and Santiago de Cuba.

"We stand ready to offer scheduled service as soon as the United States and Cuba allow commercial flights", Torno added.