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# Southwest Airlines Begins Service to Panama City Beach

## Inaugural Festivities Culminate With Airport Celebration and News Conference

PANAMA CITY BEACH, Fla., May 24 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Southwest Airlines today celebrated the airline's new service at Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP) with a beach-themed celebration that included plenty of beach balls and local music.

Hundreds of Customers and Employees were on hand as Southwest Airlines' Chairman of the Board, President, and CEO Gary Kelly joined ECP Airport Authority Vice Chairman Bill Cramer and St. Joe CEO Britt Greene in a morning news conference. To see Southwest Airlines' full ECP schedule or to book a flight to or from ECP, visit [southwest.com](http://southwest.com).

The Dallas-based airline now offers a better way to the beach with a total of eight daily, nonstop, Boeing 737 departures:

- Panama City Beach (ECP) to/from Nashville (BNA) – two daily flights
- Panama City Beach (ECP) to/from Houston Hobby (HOU) – two daily flights
- Panama City Beach (ECP) to/from Baltimore/Washington (BWI) – two daily flights
- Panama City Beach (ECP) to/from Orlando (MCO) – two daily flights

In addition to the eight daily nonstop flights, Southwest Airlines will offer direct (with a stop but no change of planes) or connecting service to more than 58 destinations from Panama City Beach, including Dallas and Chicago. Southwest Airlines will operate from Gate 3 at the new Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport with approximately 30 Employees who will call the region home.

"Southwest Airlines promises to bring low fares, great Customer Service, and a strong community commitment to the great folks of Northwest Florida," Kelly said. "Serving this region has been on our wish list for quite some time, and it's a proud day for Southwest Airlines to finally begin flying to the beautiful Emerald Coast."

This morning's press conference capped a weekend full of festivities celebrating the inaugural flights (Southwest officially launched service on Sunday, May 23). The carrier kicked off the weekend by landing the first commercial aircraft at the first U.S. airport to be built in more than a decade. A Southwest Boeing 737 jet was met by a water cannon salute and local Southwest fans and Employees. On Saturday evening, Southwest Airlines hosted the "Tootsies Tweetup," giving local Customers a chance to mix and mingle with the Social

Media-savvy airline and a chance to win roundtrip tickets, at Tootsies, a local establishment. The first Southwest Customers on Sunday morning were serenaded by local band, Todd Sparks and The Shrimboat Cowboys, and were treated to coffee, a southern breakfast, and

beach balls in the Southwest Airlines gate area. Southwest Employees also celebrated the official first day of service by donating volunteer hours with the Florida Trail Association, where they cleared hiking trails and built bridges in Florida Trail's East Pine Log Trail in Pine Log State Forest. This section of the Florida Trail is about four miles northwest of the northern boundary of the new airport.

To see more details about the carrier's weekend festivities, visit Southwest's blog at: [www.blogsouthwest.com](http://www.blogsouthwest.com).

Southwest Airlines now serves seven airports in Florida, and the airline is the largest intra-state carrier, hosting 46 percent of all intra-Florida airline traffic. Southwest began service to Florida in 1996, opening two cities on the same day: Ft. Lauderdale/Hollywood and Tampa Bay. Orlando opened on April 7 of the same year. Jacksonville followed in 1997, West Palm Beach in 2001, and Ft. Myers/Naples in 2005. Southwest Airlines honored the State of Florida recently with the unveiling of *Florida One*, a Boeing 737 emblazoned with an artist's rendering of the state flag. Click on the following link to see a video of the Florida One aircraft: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKnsyYbfC60>.

Southwest Airlines is the nation's largest carrier in terms of originating domestic passengers boarded, currently serving 69 cities in 35 states. Based in Dallas, Southwest currently operates more than 3,300 flights a day and has nearly 35,000 Employees systemwide.

[www.southwest.com](http://www.southwest.com)

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