



Delta Air Lines Delta Connection

Delta Air Lines is one of the top four largest airlines in the United States as well as operating an extensive international route network. Delta commenced operations in 1929 at Monroe, Louisiana and grew with a southern route structure building hubs at Atlanta, Georgia and Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW), Texas as well as using Chicago-O'hare Airport, Miami, and New Orleans as major focal points. Delta is now based in Atlanta and began service to Albuquerque on February 15, 1983 with three daily flights to DFW using Boeing 727-200 aircraft. Boeing 737-200 jets were introduced later that year as well as a nonstop flight to Atlanta however the Atlanta flight was discontinued in 1985. On April 1, 1987 Delta merged with Western Airlines which added Boeing 737-300 aircraft and new routes from Albuquerque to Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, and El Paso. A flight to Lubbock, Texas was briefly operated in 1988 as an extension off of a Los Angeles to Albuquerque flight. All Los Angeles flights then ended in 1990.



Delta Boeing 727-200 in the original livery when service began to Albuquerque in 1983.



Delta Boeing 737-200.



Delta route map from February, 1983.

The 1990's saw significant growth for Delta at Albuquerque. In late 1992, flights to Atlanta were reinstated as well as a new flight to Cincinnati, Ohio which became hub for Delta. Two years later service to Tucson was added as an extension for flights to and from Atlanta and DFW however this flight ran late at night and often only one way in the westbound direction. In 1995 a flight to Colorado Springs was added that continued onto the Cincinnati hub. McDonnell Douglas MD-88 and MD-90 aircraft as well as Boeing 757's were introduced in the 1990's followed by the Boeing 737-800 in early 2000. SkyWest Airlines, operating as a Delta Connection feeder carrier, began Canadair Regional Jet service from Albuquerque to the Salt Lake City hub in 1995 and added flights to the DFW hub in 2002. From the mid 1990's through 2004 Delta and SkyWest were operating up to 15 flights per day from Albuquerque to seven cities. This made Delta the second busiest carrier at Albuquerque behind Southwest. Delta also relocated to a larger ticket counter at the Albuquerque Sunport and opened a Crown Room club for its premier travelers.



Delta's Boeing 757-200 served Albuquerque from 1991 through 2020.



Delta MD-88 at the Albuquerque Sunport wearing an interim paint scheme in the late 1990's.



Delta Connection CRJ-200 operated by SkyWest Airlines at Albuquerque.



Delta's domestic route map from August, 1989.

Delta began downsizing its Albuquerque operations during the 2000's. The original 727 aircraft were retired by 2002 and all flights to the DFW hub were discontinued in 2005 followed by all flights to the Cincinnati hub in 2008. The extension flights to Colorado Springs, El Paso, and Tucson had also ended. All service to Salt Lake City was transferred to Delta Connection by 2003 and by 2008 the only Delta mainline jet service from Albuquerque was on the flights to Atlanta. In the latter 2000s Delta Connection flights to Salt Lake City also saw brief operations by other regional carriers including Atlantic Southeast (ASA), Mesaba, Pinnacle, and ExpressJet Airlines. SkyWest, the primary Delta Connection carrier at Albuquerque, began flying larger CRJ-700 and CRJ-900 regional jets. During the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta in October 2007, Delta operated several flights to Los Angeles and a single nonstop to New York's LaGuardia airport which is the only time that any airline has flown a nonstop to

that airfield. In December, 2007, Delta Connection flights were planned from Santa Fe, New Mexico to Salt Lake City and Los Angeles however these plans were delayed due to an environmental impact study for the Santa Fe airport. As the nation's economy then took a major trend downward, the plans for Santa Fe service were cancelled.



Delta Boeing 737-800 at Albuquerque in a new livery called "Colors in Motion" adopted in 2000.



Delta's MD-90 served Albuquerque from 2007 through 2019.



Delta Connection CRJ-700, operated by Atlantic Southeast Airlines, at Albuquerque in 2005.



Delta Connection Embraer 145's, operated by ExpressJet, briefly served Albuquerque in 2008. This aircraft wears the current livery entitled "Onward and Upward" also added in 2008.

Delta merged with Northwest Airlines on January 31, 2010 adding new service from Albuquerque to Minneapolis/St. Paul using Airbus A319 and A320 jets. These flights became seasonal in 2013, operating only from May through December of each year. Delta reached a lull at Albuquerque during the winter of early 2015 operating a total of less than two daily mainline flights to Atlanta and three daily Delta Connection flights to Salt Lake City however mainline aircraft began returning on some flights to Salt Lake later that year. By the summer of 2015 Delta was back up to three daily flights to Atlanta, one to Minneapolis, and three to Salt Lake City but the schedule continues to be reduced during the winter months. Boeing 717 and 737-900 aircraft were introduced in 2016 and service to Los Angeles was reinstated in 2017 by way of Delta Connection carriers' SkyWest and Compass Airlines using Embraer-175 regional jets. Compass also operated some flights to Salt Lake but the carrier shut down in 2020, once again leaving SkyWest as the single provider for Delta Connection service at Albuquerque.



Delta Airbus A319 at Albuquerque, acquired with the merger of Northwest Airlines in 2010.



Delta Connection CRJ-900, operated by Mesaba Airlines, briefly served Albuquerque in 2010 and 2011.



Delta's Boeing 717, originally called the MD-95, was used on select flights between Albuquerque and Salt Lake City during 2016 and 2017.



Delta used the Boeing 737-900 to replace the older 757's on flights to Atlanta and Minneapolis beginning in 2016.



Three Delta aircraft on the gates at the Albuquerque Sunport in 2016.



Delta Connection Embraer 175, operated by SkyWest, began serving Albuquerque in 2017.

In mid-March, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic struck causing airline traffic to drop by more than 95 percent. Delta cancelled most flights during the month of April including all service to Atlanta and reduced its schedules at Albuquerque from eight flights per day to only two in May and one daily Delta Connection flight to Salt Lake City in June. By July, 2020, one flight to Atlanta had returned as well as two more flights to Salt Lake and by August all of the Los Angeles flights were reinstated as well as a second Atlanta flight. The Minneapolis flight which normally runs during the summer and fall was not operated nor was a third Atlanta flight which is normally added during this time. Overall, Delta cut the most service at Albuquerque by June, 2020 but was the fastest carrier to resume its service as the pandemic began to ease. The Minneapolis flight returned for the summer and fall seasons beginning in 2021. A third Atlanta flight also began in the summer of 2021 and is now operating year-round. All three Atlanta flights are now flown with either Airbus A321's or Boeing 737-900's. The three daily flights to Los Angeles and two of the three to Salt Lake City operate by SkyWest Airlines as Delta Connection, using Embraer-175 regional jets. The Minneapolis flight and the third Salt Lake City flight operate with a Delta mainline jet.



Delta Airbus A321 began serving Albuquerque in 2020 primarily on flights to Atlanta.



Delta began flying the Airbus A220-300 aircraft to Albuquerque in early 2024.

From 1991 through 2016, Delta operated Boeing 757 aircraft at Albuquerque on a regular basis during all but the slowest winter months of each year and with as many as four of the type each day. Although several other carriers have operated 757's off and on at Albuquerque, Delta flew the aircraft the most consistently giving the carrier the claim of operating the largest commercial airliner into Albuquerque for over 25 years. The 757's flew from Albuquerque to Atlanta, Cincinnati, Dallas/Fort Worth, Minneapolis, and Tucson. These aircraft were replaced with Boeing 737-900's on the remaining flights to Atlanta in 2016 and in January 2020, the Atlanta flights were then switched to operate with Airbus A321 aircraft which is of about equal size to the Boeing 757. Several of Delta's larger widebody aircraft have also stopped in Albuquerque for various reasons including the Boeing 767-400, Boeing 777, Lockheed L-1011, and the Airbus A330-300.

Since 2007, during the annual Albuquerque International Hot Air Balloon Fiesta held in early October each year, Delta has added extra flights and upgraded the aircraft size on several regular scheduled flights to meet demand. The event was cancelled in 2020 due to the covid-19 pandemic and no extra flights were added that year or in 2021. Minimal extra service was added in 2022 but by Balloon Fiesta of 2023, a significant number of extra flights and aircraft upgrades were added.



In the Spring of 2002, a vintage Douglas DC-3 aircraft painted in the original Delta Air Lines paint scheme was flown throughout the United States making a stop in Albuquerque.

Delta is a member of the SkyTeam Alliance of carriers from around the world that work together to provide world-wide service. Several of Delta's aircraft are painted in a special livery indicating such with example shown below of a Delta Boeing 757 at Albuquerque.



As of 2024, Delta and Delta Connection have yet to service any other city in New Mexico. A further evaluation for the carriers that have operated as Delta Connection including SkyWest, ASA, ExpressJet, and Compass, can be found in separate links for each carrier.