

Chinese passenger airlines can increase US flights from 35 to 50 per week

CHINESE passenger airlines will be allowed to boost their weekly round-trip US flights to 50 starting on March 31, up from the current 35, the US Transportation Department said on Monday, returning the market to nearly one-third of pre-pandemic levels.

The approval “is a significant step forward in further normalization of the US-China market in anticipation of the Summer 2024 traffic season,” the USDOT said.

More than 150 weekly round-trip passenger flights were allowed by each side before restrictions were imposed in

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early 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but until August 2023, Chinese and US carriers could each fly only 12 a week between the two countries.

The number rose on September 1 to 18 weekly round-trips and then to 24 per week

starting from October 29. The USDOT approved 35 for Chinese carriers in November.

Airlines for America, a group representing American Airlines, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines, which fly a combined 31 weekly flights to China, said it “supports the US government’s approach to slowly, gradually and reciprocally reopen the market with China. It’s imperative the US government maintains this approach.”

The Chinese Embassy in Washington said it was “glad to see the positive progress made on increasing direct passenger

flights between China and the US.” It is working to “further facilitate cross-border travel and promote people-to-people exchanges between the two countries.”

Other international air markets involving China have reopened far more quickly, with seat capacity between China and the United Kingdom this month exceeding pre-pandemic levels by 30 percent, and China-Singapore by 6 percent, according to aviation data provider OAG.

The USDOT said it was engaged in a productive dialogue with China’s aviation regulator

towards the “implementation of a roadmap to provide for a gradual, broader reopening of the US-China air services market and a phased and predictable return to the capacity entitlements” specified under a US-China agreement.

On a trip to China last year, US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said she wanted to boost travel and tourism between the two countries.

If China returned to 2019 US tourism levels, it would add US\$30 billion to the US economy and 50,000 US jobs, Raimondo said in August.

(Reuters)

C919, ARJ21 set for Southeast Asia flying runs

COMAC will conduct flying displays of its C919 and ARJ21 jets in five Southeast Asian countries, the Chinese state-owned planemaker said, as it looks to lay the groundwork for future international sales.

Over the next few days, the C919 and ARJ21 jets will conduct showcase flights in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesia, the Shanghai-headquartered aircraft maker said in a statement.

It follows the arrival of the C919 passenger jet in Vietnam to participate in an airshow on Monday, after the Singapore Airshow concluded on Sunday.

The two planes were showcased at the Singapore Airshow last week, marking the first display outside Chinese territory of the C919 jet, a narrow-body plane touted as a competitor to Boeing’s 737 MAX and Airbus’ A320neo.

The ARJ21 regional jet is its smaller predecessor that mainly flies in China but also is operated by an Indonesian airline. The aircraft with 78 to 97 seats took off from the private Van Don International Airport in northern Vietnam yesterday afternoon to conduct a demonstration flight, according to COMAC.

“The primary purpose of these flights is to ... showcase the two aircraft’s good performance and lay the groundwork for future market expansion in Southeast Asia,” the company added.

China has said it wants to secure broader international recognition for the C919 this year, including pursuing European Union Aviation Safety Agency certification. The jet has so far gained more than 1,000 orders, but mostly from Chinese airlines and aircraft lessors.

(Reuters)



A view of China’s self-developed large passenger jet C919. — CFP