

Memphis is Connected

Non-stop flights from more than 20 North American cities make Memphis an easy-access destination.

By Lisa Matte



Air Canada now offers direct flights connecting Memphis and Toronto. Frontier Airlines launched non-stop service between Memphis and Las Vegas in August and plans to begin non-stop flights to Orlando on Nov. 2.

Next April, the carrier will begin seasonal direct service to Philadelphia. Last year Allegiant Air expanded its roster of seasonal direct flights between Memphis and Los Angeles to year-round status. And that's just the beginning.

The bottom line: When it comes to Memphis, you *can* get here from there.

That's good news for corporate meeting planners and business travelers with Memphis on their radar. Even better, The Guest House at Graceland is just 10 minutes from Memphis International Airport.

One of the city's most unique and flexible meeting locations, The Guest House at Graceland offers more than 17,000 square feet of meeting space to accommodate groups of up to 1,350 in an unobstructed setting and to host smaller gatherings in breakout configurations ranging from 918 to 4,578 square

feet. More intimate state-of-the-art facilities include an Executive Boardroom and four individual meeting rooms named for music halls of fame that claim Elvis as a member — Blues, Country, Gospel and Rock. The Guest House at Graceland also boasts its own 464-seat theater.

Since 2013 when Delta Air Lines pulled its hub service from Memphis, the airport has been actively reinventing itself as a destination gateway — and those efforts are paying off in big ways.

“It’s a different type of airport now,” said Glen Thomas, director of strategic marketing and communications, Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority. “We lost some connectivity, but when Delta no longer had a stranglehold here, we saw an opportunity.”

To make the most of that opportunity, Memphis International Airport leadership developed a plan to actively recruit airlines and develop new routes. That effort included hiring David “Chip” Gentry, a 20-year veteran of the aviation industry, to serve as the airport’s first air service research and development manager. In his new role, Gentry develops strategies to increase

passenger and cargo traffic, identifies markets for new air service, and works with airlines to maintain existing service and add additional routes.

Carriers currently operating out of Memphis International Airport — Air Canada, Allegiant Air, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Frontier, Southwest

Airlines and United Airlines — already offer non-stop service to more than 30 North American destinations, but airport leadership has its eye on the horizon.

“International flights are one area we would definitely like to improve,” said Thomas. “We’d also like to see more coverage of the western part of the United States.”

To that end, airport leadership recently attended an event in Barcelona to connect with international carriers. On the home front, the airport is reaching out to regional chambers of commerce to identify additional non-stop destinations of interest to the business community.

While the drive to bring in new carriers and new routes continues, Memphis International Airport is also in the midst of a strategic initiative encompassing airport infrastructure and long-term goals. A main component of the plan involves a complete overhaul of B Concourse to create a more user-friendly travel environment. Highlights: more spacious passenger hold rooms, expanded passenger movement areas, new moving walkways, higher ceilings, the introduction of more natural light, and an upgraded concessions program

showcasing unique and local vendors operating alongside commercial chain outlets.

Also on deck, a frequent-parker rewards program, streamlined car rental access, and on-site, concierge-style customer service. And to make sure improvements hit the right note, Memphis International Airport is also building a database of corporate travelers to help define the needs of frequent flyers.

“Our business travelers can only benefit from additional routes and additional connectivity,” said Thomas. “The airline industry is one of supply and demand.”

In other words: Build it and they will come.