

United Airlines to add more flights to meet Thanksgiving surge

Reuters Staff

FILE PHOTO: A United Airlines passenger jet taxis at Newark Liberty International Airport, New Jersey, U.S. December 6, 2019. REUTERS/Chris Helgren

(Reuters) - U.S. air carrier United Airlines [UALO](https://www.ualo.com) said on Monday it expects the Thanksgiving holiday week to be its busiest since March and is adding more than 1,400 domestic flights to cater to the surge.

The Chicago-based airline said it is seeing more customers book Thanksgiving travel closer to the departure date this year.

According to the airline, 50% of United flyers are booking their tickets less than 30 days before the travel date compared with last year when around 40% of bookings were done 30 days before departure.

A recent U.S. Department of Defense study claimed the risk of exposure to the coronavirus on flights is very low, a positive sign for the airline industry as it tries to rebound from the pandemic's crushing effect on travel.

United also said it expects to fly 48% of its overall schedule in December compared with 2019, adding more than 140 daily flights and increasing capacity on more than 350 routes.

The airline said it is monitoring bookings in real time to swap in larger aircraft when needed, to accommodate last-minute demand.

Last month, United reported its daily cash burn slowed to an average \$25 million in the quarter ended Sept. 30 from \$40 million in the second quarter, and included \$4 million per day in severance and debt payments.

United and other airlines have signaled a slow but steady improvement in leisure demand but do not foresee a recovery to 2019 levels for at least two years, with business and international travel particularly slow to bounce back amid ongoing travel restrictions.

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