

Additional Walla Walla flight extended indefinitely



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Walla Walla's new three-flight schedule won't be departing the community any time soon.

The addition of a third flight, which takes off today, has been extended indefinitely, travel and Walla Walla Regional Airport officials say.

The schedule — which fluctuates in timing and dates — has travel leaders confident the airline could continue to change options based on community needs, said Experience Walla Walla Executive Director Ron Peck.

“It doesn't guarantee that the third flight will stay,” he said. “But I'm cautiously optimistic.”

Starting today, Alaska has added a third flight five days a week. Tuesdays and Saturdays will remain two-flight days through June 4.

Flights will leave Walla Walla for Seattle daily at 6 a.m., then every day but Tuesday at 11:16 a.m., and every day but Saturday at 6:06 p.m.

Flights heading to Walla Walla will leave Seattle daily at 9:50 a.m. With the exception of Tuesdays and Saturdays, flights will leave Seattle daily at 4:40 p.m.; and then they will depart Seattle daily at 8:20 p.m.

Starting June 5, the three-flight schedule bumps to six days a week, excluding Saturdays.

That date also marks the introduction of a late inbound flight. Rather than departing Seattle at 8:20 p.m., the last flight will leave at 11:05 p.m., arriving at 11:57 p.m.

“It’s a better spread between the second and third flights,” Peck said. “It can generate more connecting traffic from longer haul travels.”

Initially the community was to return to the earlier inbound flight in late August, and to the two-flight schedule in September.

But the system is showing both have been extended, said World Wide Travel Service owner Paul Schneidmiller.

He said the three-flight schedule six days a week is indefinite after its June start. The late-night flight is also staying through at least Oct. 29.

“That could change,” Schneidmiller said.

The airline is demonstrating through tweaks in the system that it may be evaluating needs for the market as it assesses demand and load factors.

Airport Manager Jennifer Skoglund said the changes offer more and easier travel access for leisure and business travelers.

“The new schedule will give our local travelers increased opportunity and flexibility to travel in and out of Walla Walla for business and leisure,” she said. “... the additional flight will allow increased opportunity for tourists to come and enjoy Walla Walla. The Sunday evening flight out of Walla Walla is a positive change as it will allow Sunday to be a full day of touring.”

The passenger numbers and load factors continue to grow.

February’s inbound and outbound passenger totals surpassed 3,000 people for the first time.

Last month, 3,046 people flew into the Walla Walla Regional Airport, compared to the previous year’s 2,671, which had been the previous high.

Outbound numbers showed 3,041 people flew out of the community. That was up from the previous February when 2,973 passengers represented the highest February on the books.