

"Charleston Airport" redirects here. For airport of Charleston, West Virginia, see Yeager Airport. For other uses, see Charleston Airport (disambiguation).

Charleston International Airport (IATA: CHS, ICAO: KCHS, FAA LID: CHS) is a joint civil-military airport located in North Charleston, South Carolina, United States. The airport is operated by the Charleston County Aviation Authority under a joint-use agreement with Joint Base Charleston.[3] It is South Carolina's largest and busiest airport; in 2019 the airport served nearly 4.9 million passengers in its busiest year on record.[4] The airport is located in North Charleston and is approximately 12 miles (19 km) northwest of downtown Charleston. The airport serves as a focus city for Breeze Airways. It is also home to the Boeing facility that assembles the 787 Dreamliner.[5]

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History[edit]

In 1928, the Charleston Airport Corporation was founded and purchased 700 acres of land previously belonging to a mining company. Although privately developed at first, the City of Charleston floated bonds in 1931 to acquire a portion of the site for passenger service.

Within ten years, three runways were paved and outfitted with lighting for nighttime operations. In World War II, control of the airfield passed to the United States Army though civilian service was allowed to continue to use the airfield. After the war, the airfield reverted to civilian use for a short time. In 1949, a new passenger terminal was built.

During the Korean War, the airfield was reactivated for military use and in 1952, the City of Charleston and the United States Air Force reached an agreement on control of the base and the runways—an arrangement that has been renegotiated over time and that continues to this day. In 1979, the civilian portions of the airport were transferred from the City of Charleston to the Charleston County Aviation Authority, which had operated two other airports in the area. The current terminal on the south end of the airport was built in the 1980s on land acquired by Georgia Pacific.[6]

In October 2009, Boeing announced that it would build a major plant on 265 acres at the airport as a second final assembly site for its 787 Dreamliner commercial aircraft. The facility began limited operations in July 2011 and rolled out its first completed aircraft in

April 2012. Additional facilities to complement aircraft assembly have since been announced by the company.[5]

Throughout its history, all three domestic legacy carriers (American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, and United Airlines) and their predecessor companies or affiliates have served Charleston International Airport. Aside from the legacy carriers, Charleston has seen periods of additional air service from other carriers, but prior to 2010, those services were short-lived. The airport has had brief periods of international service. In 2001, Air Canada briefly served the airport from Toronto but ended service immediately after the September 11th attacks. Porter Airlines briefly served Charleston with flights to Toronto in 2015. Since 2010, the airport's passenger figures have doubled.[7] New services established by additional airlines during this time along with increased services from the three legacy carriers have contributed to this growth. As of 2019, the airport is the only facility in South Carolina to offer regular flights to destinations in all four time zones in the contiguous United States.

In October 2018, British Airways announced the commencement of a direct route from London Heathrow for the summer season, flying twice weekly which commenced in April 2019.[8] This became the first scheduled transatlantic flight to operate from Charleston.[9] This also made Charleston the smallest U.S. city that British Airways serviced, and the only U.S. city that they serviced seasonally. This route was canceled in December 2020 following the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, the newly-established Breeze Airways announced that the airport would serve as a focus city for the airline and announced service to 11 cities.

Facilities[edit]

The airport consists of four general areas: the military area to the west, the airline terminal to the south, the general aviation area to the east, and the Boeing assembly area further to the south. The combined airport area of Charleston International Airport and Charleston Air Force Base covers 2,060 acres (830 ha) and has two runways: 15/33, 9,001 ft × 200 ft (2,744 m × 61 m) and 03/21, 7,000 ft × 150 ft (2,134 m × 46 m).[2]

For the 12-month period ending May 31, 2019, the airport had 118,211 aircraft operations, an average of 324 per day: 42% commercial, 28% general aviation, 16% military, and 13% air taxi.[2][1] In May 2019, there were 81 aircraft based at this airport: 28 single-engine, 6 multi-engine, 43 jet, and 4 helicopter.[2]

Joint Base Charleston owns and operates the runways at the airport and has an agreement with the Charleston County Aviation Authority to allow civilian use of the field. General aviation services are operated by the Charleston County Aviation Authority. Boeing South Carolina operates the Boeing assembly area.

Terminal[edit]

The current airline terminal completed a three-year, \$200 million redevelopment project in 2016 which added five gates and significantly renovated the interior appearance of the facility.[10] The original terminal was built in 1987 and was designed by Howard Needles Tammen & Bergendoff, Davis & Floyd, Inc., and Lucas & Stubbs.[11][12]

Both departures and arrivals are located on the same floor, with the departure area to the east end of the terminal and the arrival area to the west end. Flights depart from two

concourses: Concourse A towards the east and Concourse B towards the west. Since 2015, a consolidated TSA security checkpoint is utilized for both concourses.[13] Charleston International Airport is classified as a security-level Category I airport by the TSA. The airport is equipped to handle international flights.

Concourse A contains five gates that are primarily used by Delta Air Lines and Delta Connection, with other airlines occasionally using gates as needed for overflow. Concourse B contains ten gates and is used by other airlines serving the airport. Concourse B also contains the international arrivals facility.

Ground transportation[edit]

Charleston International Airport is located near the interchange of Interstate 26 and Interstate 526 and is accessible from both interstates using International Boulevard and Montague Avenue exits. The airport offers a free cell phone parking lot for passenger pickups. For short-term and long-term parking, the airport offers surface or garage parking for up to 30 days. Rental cars from major companies are available. The airport completed a rental car pavilion adjacent to the terminal in 2014.[14]

CARTA, the regional mass transit system, serves the airport with two bus routes that operate seven days a week from 6:00 a.m. to midnight.

CARTA Express Route 4, also known as North Area Shuttle (NASH) Express is an express service to downtown Charleston with stops at the North Charleston Visitors Center and at the Tanger Outlets. Total trip time from the airport to downtown is usually 25–35 minutes. CARTA Route 11 is a local service that connects the airport to downtown Charleston with several stops along Dorchester Road and Meeting Street in North Charleston. Total trip time from the airport to downtown is usually 50–55 minutes.

Airlines and destinations[edit]

Passenger[edit]

Airlines Destinations Refs

Alaska Airlines Seattle/Tacoma [15]

Allegiant Air Cincinnati, Cleveland (ends December 31, 2021),[16] Columbus–Rickenbacker, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Punta Gorda (FL)

Seasonal: Belleville/St. Louis, Louisville [17]

American Airlines Charlotte, Dallas/Fort Worth

Seasonal: Washington–National [18]

American Eagle Charlotte, Chicago–O'Hare, Dallas/Fort Worth, Miami, New York–LaGuardia, Philadelphia, Washington–National [18]

Breeze Airways Akron/Canton,[19] Columbus–Glenn,[20] Hartford, Huntsville,[21]

Louisville, New Orleans,[22] Norfolk, Pittsburgh,[23] Providence,[24] Richmond,[25]

Tampa

Delta Air Lines Atlanta [26]

Delta Connection Boston, Detroit, New York–JFK, New York–LaGuardia [26]

Frontier Airlines Seasonal: Cleveland, Denver, Philadelphia, Trenton [27]

JetBlue Boston, Fort Lauderdale, Los Angeles, Newark, New York–JFK, New York–LaGuardia[28] [29]

Silver Airways Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, Tampa [30]

Southwest Airlines Austin (begins March 10, 2022),[31] Baltimore, Chicago–Midway, Dallas–Love, Houston–Hobby, Nashville
Seasonal: Denver, Kansas City, St. Louis [32]
United Airlines Chicago–O'Hare, Newark
Seasonal: Denver, Houston–Intercontinental, Washington–Dulles [33]
United Express Chicago–O'Hare, Denver, Houston–Intercontinental, Newark, Washington–Dulles
Seasonal: Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus–Glenn, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh
Cargo[edit]
Airlines Destinations
Atlas Air Anchorage, Everett, Grottaglie, Wichita–McConnell AFB
FedEx Express Greensboro, Memphis, Nashville
FedEx Feeder Memphis
UPS Airlines Columbia (SC), Greenville/Spartanburg
Statistics[edit]
Airline market share[edit]
Largest airlines at CHS
(April 2020 – March 2021)[34]
Rank Airline Passengers Share
1 Delta Air Lines 249,000 16.05%
2 Southwest Airlines 346,000 23.32%
3 PSA Airlines 217,000 14.01%
4 American Airlines 124,000 7.98%
5 Republic Airlines 192,000 12.4%
6 Other 423,000 27.25%
Top destinations[edit]
Busiest domestic routes from CHS (July 2020 – June 2021)[34]
Rank City Passengers Carriers
1 Atlanta, Georgia 217,750 Delta, Southwest
2 Charlotte, North Carolina 183,490 American
3 Baltimore, Maryland 77,570 Southwest
4 Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas 71,010 American
5 Nashville, Tennessee 56,720 Southwest
6 Chicago–O'Hare, Illinois 56,440 American, United
7 New York–JFK, New York 51,360 Delta, JetBlue
8 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 51,040 American, Frontier
9 Newark, New Jersey 49,580 JetBlue, United
10 Chicago–Midway, Illinois 48,850 Southwest
Annual traffic[edit]
Annual passenger traffic at CHS, 2003 to present[35]
Year Passengers Year Passengers
2003 1,616,255 2013 2,913,265
2004 1,828,597 2014 3,131,072

2005 2,143,105 2015 3,415,952

2006 1,877,631 2016 3,708,133

2007 2,275,541 2017 3,987,427

2008 2,334,219 2018 4,470,239

2009 2,190,251 2019 4,871,062

2010 2,021,328 2020 1,952,271

2011 2,520,829 2021

2012 2,593,063 2022

Accidents and incidents[edit]

December 31, 1946: A Douglas C-47 operated by Inter Continental Air Transport crashed after a missed first approach. He attempted to remain visual while flying below a 500-foot ragged ceiling. Flying over dark, heavily wooded terrain, the left wing struck treetops, lost control and crashed 3.1 miles NW of Charleston. All five occupants (three crew, two passengers) perished.[36]

March 14, 1947: a Douglas DC-3 operated by US Airlines approached Charleston low and left of the runway, struck trees 3,800 feet from the runway, crashed and burned. Both occupants were killed.[37]

August 23, 1955: A USAF Kaiser-Frazer Fairchild C-119 Flying Boxcar impacted a tree and crashed after a takeoff for a night flight in a residential area, 1.7 miles SE of Charleston AFB. A fire erupted, destroying several homes. Reports said one engine was on fire when the crash occurred. Five of the 11 occupants on the aircraft were killed and four on the ground died.[38]

October 3, 1956: A USAF Douglas C-124 Globemaster II crashed on approach .9 of a mile NW of Charleston AFB when the pilot descended below minumums, struck trees and crashed. Three of the 10 on board were killed.[39]

September 18, 1979: A USAF Lockheed C-141 Starlifter caught fire after touchdown at CHS when the landing gear retracted along with several other mechanical issues occurring at once. The aircraft was destroyed, but there were no fatalities.[40]

November 2, 2020: Joel T. Drogomir was arrested on a charge "conveying false information regarding attempted use of a destructive device" after he falsely threatened to have a bomb.[41][42][43]